

Disney XD sets sights
on global growth **p24**

Random House and
Stardoll team up **p49**

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kids licenses in the US **p70**

kidscreen

engaging the global children's entertainment industry

A publication of Brunico Communications Ltd. JUNE 2011

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The cover features two young children, a boy and a girl, looking surprised and excited. The boy, on the left, has blonde hair and is wearing a red plaid shirt, holding a magnifying glass over a landscape scene. The girl, on the right, has dark hair and is wearing a pink sleeveless top. They are set against a backdrop of a bright sky with clouds and a green landscape.

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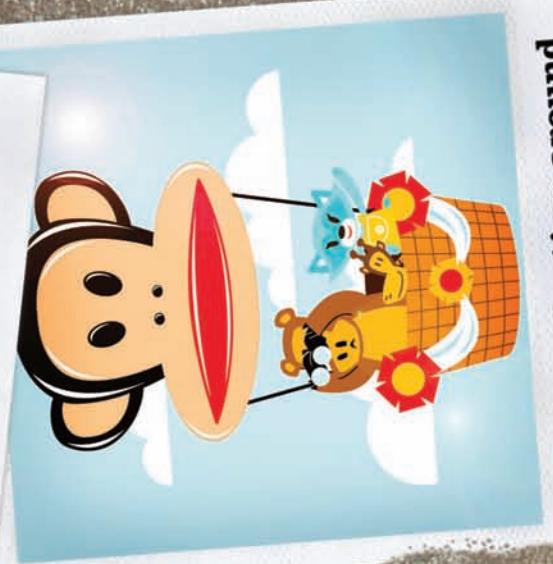




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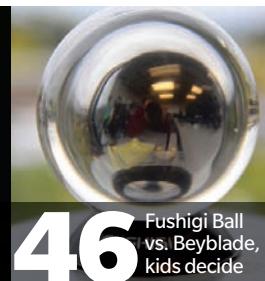
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Stuck in a rut

I've been covering the kids consumer products and licensing scene for almost eight years now, and I don't know about you, but I'm a little bored. Frankly, I blame a retail and media climate where risk-aversion has become the deciding factor for just about everything.

Retailers are only picking up a handful of properties that they deem carry pre-existing brand awareness, while the bulk of TV and movie studios are reserving the greenlight and big marketing spend for similarly characterized projects. It's a situation that continues to whittle down not only opportunity for creators but also choice for kids.

group of consumers—the group that turned their kids onto their favorite shows and characters and drove these multi-million-dollar revivals. And in the absence of parental pushing, as gentle as it may be, there's no reason why refurbished IPs of those vintages would be guaranteed to ring a bell with this generation of kids.

I know, I know. "Well, what about Disney's holy Mickey-Winnie-Princess triumvirate or Thomas and Friends or even Sesame Street? Surely US\$20 billion or so a year at retail can't be wrong," you say. There's no arguing with the success of these heritage properties, but I contend their staying power is derived from the fact that they've never really been out of sight since their creation, making them very different from the scorching hits that dropped off the radar the minute their fans grew up. Additionally, licensors of classic properties continuously strive to make them relevant and fresh to each successive generation, drawing on the archetypes and play patterns that appeal to most human beings on a fundamental level. (See Senior Writer Gary Rusak's excellent look at the nature of play and its importance to licensed IPs, "Playing with Character" on page 54.)

In fact, to quote Princess Leia, I think grounding concepts in a similarly solid foundation may be "our only hope" if new IPs are to have a chance to flourish. Creators need to look at making something that is simultaneously familiar (to comfort retailers and broadcast execs), yet original and uniquely tailored to the current generation's tastes. HIT Entertainment's Mike the Knight (also mentioned in Gary's article), is a great example. Most would be hard-pressed to recall a licensed character that traded on medieval themes and archetypes, even though most children, particularly boys, go through a knights-and-dragons phase at some point in their lives. And it's exactly why Mike's combination of the familiar and new should strike a chord with this crop of preschoolers. After all, it's not exactly like King Arthur or Beowulf playsets and trading cards were all the rage in their parents' playgrounds—and that's a good thing.

Cheers,

Lana

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The List

Five things on our radar this month

1 Gamification is the word

It's all fun and games until someone makes it educational. And that's exactly what Bill Gates is planning to do, starting with a pledge of more than US\$20 million dollars to create game-based and digital learning tools. The Microsoft mogul's introduction of gaming principles into the US education system has only helped to fuel popularity of word du jour "gamification"—a.k.a. the application of game mechanics, feedback loops and rewards to drive deeper engagement in real life. However, gamification may soon be deemed "sooo 2011" as a buzzword. How does up-and-comer "neo media" grab you?



2 Kid-friendly future?

Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg recently went on record saying he wants open up the social networking site to younger users. While Facebook hasn't yet looked into instituting COPPA-approved privacy policies, he says the site will get on that once the age limits are lifted. Right now, Facebook requires users to be 18 or older, but resourceful kids still "friend", "tag" and "like" their way deeper into the site's social ad-driven environs.



3 A short return

After making one of the splashiest launches yet seen for a boys action show at MIPTV in April, it looks like production on Arnold Schwarzenegger/Stan Lee collaboration *The Governator* has been, er, terminated. With a recent spate of revelations made about the real Governator's personal life—and their related public scrutiny—Arnie's stepping out of the limelight indefinitely. He won't be back. (OK, we'll stop now.)



4 Pages turning

Marking another milestone in the ditching of physical media for digital, Amazon reports it's selling more Kindle eBooks than old-school print ones, either hardcover or paperback. The online retailer says it sells 105 Kindle eBooks for every 100 print copies, and free Kindle titles are not included in the stats. Perhaps bookmark makers need to start looking for new jobs, too.



5 British invasion

With UK properties Peppa Pig and Moshi Monsters making their official landing in the US market, brand owners eOne and Mind Candy have set up shop State-side. Both companies are betting that their imports—one a TV series and the other a virtual community—will engage US kids as they have on home soil.

To keep up with the news as it happens, check out kidscreen.com daily.



Jessi Dunne may have started out in straightforward consumer packaged goods sales, but after landing her first toyco job at Galoob, she got hooked on the creativity inherent in the kids biz. So when Disney came knocking, she couldn't say no.

A business mind with a lot of heart

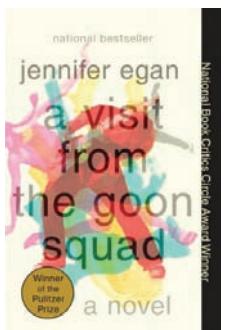
The gig EVP of brand-new consumer products division, Disney Mom and Babies that, along with giving information and support to new moms, offers products designed to meet their needs and those of their infants. The initiative is Dunne's baby. The mother of a three-year-old and 13-month-old says, "Living in this space of sleep deprivation and trying to balance work and motherhood" really had her looking at DCP's research in the area through a finer lens, and that's when the idea struck.

Cheerleader One of the things people might not know about Dunne is that she was a basketball star at her alma mater, St. Joseph's University in Pennsylvania. Team captain in her junior and senior years, she led the SJU Hawks to their first appearance at the NCAA Tournament in 1985 and has since been inducted into the university's Women's Basketball Hall of Fame. Even now, she says the experience proves invaluable. "Involvement in team sports teaches a ton of lessons, from socialization to learning the importance of playing your assigned role," she says. "In forming teams, you learn how to delegate and put the pieces together correctly. I'm part coach and a big cheerleader."

Cutting the mustard Right out of college, Dunne landed a job with a company known in the mid-'80s as R.G. French, home to that famous neon yellow mustard, French's. After a few years of selling the product into grocery stores, she attended the company's annual conference and saw the marketing execs presenting plans for the following year, and had an epiphany of sorts. "I thought that's the job I want, and sweet-talked my way into the marketing department." During her 10 years with the company she moved to the West Coast. Once she reached those sunny California shores, she wanted to stay put and took an interim gig at Delmonte, before moving to then-struggling Galoob Toys (now part of Hasbro). It turns out the decision put her on her current path. "I loved it. It was the perfect blend for me—appealing to my creative side in a very fast-paced industry that was a lot of fun."

Emotional investment In the eight years since joining Disney Consumer Products Dunne has held a number of management posts, most recently as EVP of global licensing—a job arguably larger in scope than the one she currently holds. But the new Mom and Babies division was her idea, don't forget. "I get emotionally invested in things, and I thought the company had an opportunity here," she says. So, after a lunch meeting with Disney chair Bob Iger to discuss the concept, he gave her the greenlight. "Ultimately, I want to be Andy Mooney and run DCP," she adds. "But I thought someone's going to do this for the company and how would I feel if it wasn't me? I couldn't live with that." —Lana Castleman

The BIG idea Where's your next creative breakthrough coming from?



Call it reading transmedia between the lines, if you will, but this year's Pulitzer Prize winner for fiction is a transformative reading experience. Jennifer Egan's *A Visit from the Goon Squad* is the kind of book that has so many characters introduced at different times in their lives through multiple points of view that it's tempting to read it in just one sitting. However, what really makes it transformative reading is that there aren't just words between the covers, but a mosaic of visuals, music, pauses and interjections—all created through the juxtaposition of familiar letters. Egan tells her tale in such a modern way that it's a completely original experience. Like a comic book, you get into the characters' heads. Like a magazine, there are multiple entry points. Like a PowerPoint presentation (which is the whole of the first chapter), you see and hear an explanation of the action. And like the best of all transmedia properties, the richness of the story is ultimately gleaned from an intersection of the different platforms. —Wendy Smolen

Out of Office

Tales from the frequent fliers club



Michael Dee
Director of Content, Coolabi

1. In my carry-on
you'll find water, gadgets, lip balm and inevitably something from Duty Free. I think I'm a marketer's dream!

2. My go-to gadget
is an iPad, though it's either heavier than I imagined—or I need to go to the gym more.

3. On the fly
I have learned to plan, but don't expect everything to go to plan. Delays, cancellations and tricky pitches are just part of our business.

4. Preferred in-air tunes
"Overpowered" by Roisin Murphy.

5. Best in-flight food
can be found on Virgin—their bad is still better than the rest.



6. Best power-lunch
has to be one of the beach restaurants on the Croisette. I have to pinch myself every time I eat and drink at one of them.

7. Window or aisle?
Aisle. My bladder's the size of a peanut so I'm up and down like a yo-yo.

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Nick runs the numbers on Team Umizoomi

Cunching numbers isn't a concept that commonly drives preschool IPs, but Nickelodeon is betting on math-based *Team Umizoomi*'s consumer products appeal. In fact, the licensor is self-producing the initial product line based on the series.

Since launching in January 2010, *Team Umizoomi*—hatched by the creative forces behind *Blue's Clues*—has consistently rated as a top-five preschool show on Nick US, and it currently airs in 94 countries in 19 languages. It's also the first math-centric show produced by the kidcaster. "We had a number of experts that consulted on the general development of the series and every individual episode," notes Cyma Zarghami, president of the Nickelodeon/MTVN Kids & Family Group.

The live-action/CGI series takes place in Umi City, where the streets are paved with origami. The titular team is comprised of Milli, Geo and Bot, who solve problems with their Mighty Math Powers.

"It has great stories and a great look," says Zarghami, explaining that the math curriculum could only work if the series itself captured the attention of the young audience.

And it's this focus on curriculum that's shaping Nick's consumer products plans and decisions for the property. Stepping away from the traditional preschool path of starting out with a limited apparel/softlines program in the lead-up to a full toy launch, Nick is taking *Team Umizoomi* into the realm of educational math kits. With billion-dollar properties like *Dora the Explorer* and *SpongeBob SquarePants* on its CV, the company has reason to be confident in its new approach. The move represents the first time Nickelodeon Consumer Products has launched a licensing program with an educational product in the lead.

Three different math kits are headed to market, and each will include a DVD, pencils, flash cards and a coloring book. Nick designed them in-house and has inked an exclusive distribution deal with Toys 'R' Us. The specialty retail giant should have the kits on its US shelves by the beginning of 2012, retailing for US\$19.99 apiece.

"From the time we first saw a preview of *Team Umizoomi*, we knew the program would be a hit with the preschool set," says Richard Barry, VP and general merchandise manager at Toys 'R' Us. "We've been working with Nickelodeon ever since to bring this brand to life."

The math kits will also be available directly from a soon-to-be-launched dedicated website. And in July, the kits will be supported by a TV spot and through an extensive digital marketing campaign across all Nickelodeon Kids & Family sites.

Zarghami says that Nick is looking to meet with potential partners in traditional categories at Licensing Show. "As we expand into more traditional partnerships, we will do it with a real emphasis on the curriculum," she says. "It will have to be front and center. The toys and games will have to have a real math angle." —Gary Rusak

On the circuit

Notes for the industry travel diary

July 21-24

Comic-Con International

San Diego

www.comic-con.org



The four-day event has evolved into the largest comic book and popular arts convention in North America. The event plays home to all things science fiction and fantasy, and has enjoyed a recent surge in status in Hollywood as the studios have made the event one of their first marketing stops for blockbusters-in-the-making. But don't worry—celebrities trotted out for dog-and-pony panels in Hall H are still outnumbered by the throngs of fanboys swarming the San Diego Convention Center.

August 7-11

SIGGRAPH

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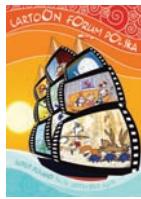
This year marks the 38th International Conference on Computer Graphics and Interactive Techniques. The five-day event is expected to draw an estimated 25,000 professionals who are excited by research, science, art, animation, gaming, interactivity, education and the web. If you're into what's next in computer graphics, this is the place to find it.

September 13-16

Cartoon Forum

Sopot, Poland

www.cartoon-media.be



This European co-production forum for TV and new platform animation draws in more than 700 delegates annually, including 240 buyers annually. And with a new Eastern European city hosting every year, the event's backdrop is always as novel as the 60 animation projects that are expected to be pitched in front of peers and potential buyers and backers.



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Hot Stuff

Blowing up

Bladez Toys puts innovative inflatable twist on R/C vehicles

Who Iain Morgan, MD at Bladez Toys. The Portsmouth, England-based RC company got off to an encouraging start in 2006 when it received funding from famed UK entrepreneur Peter Jones after being presented on *Dragon's Den*. The investment netted Jones a 24% share in the fledgling company.

You might recognize...the nearly 20-inch tall inflatable RC toys that made quite an impression in the Javits Convention Center airspace during New York Toy Fair in February. The unique creations opened up many eyes to the potential of a new form of remote-control vehicles. "RC has been bulky and slow in the past, unless it's tiny or takes too many batteries," contends Morgan. "But our Pump & Play range is big and impressive. You can just see the kids react to it—adults, too."

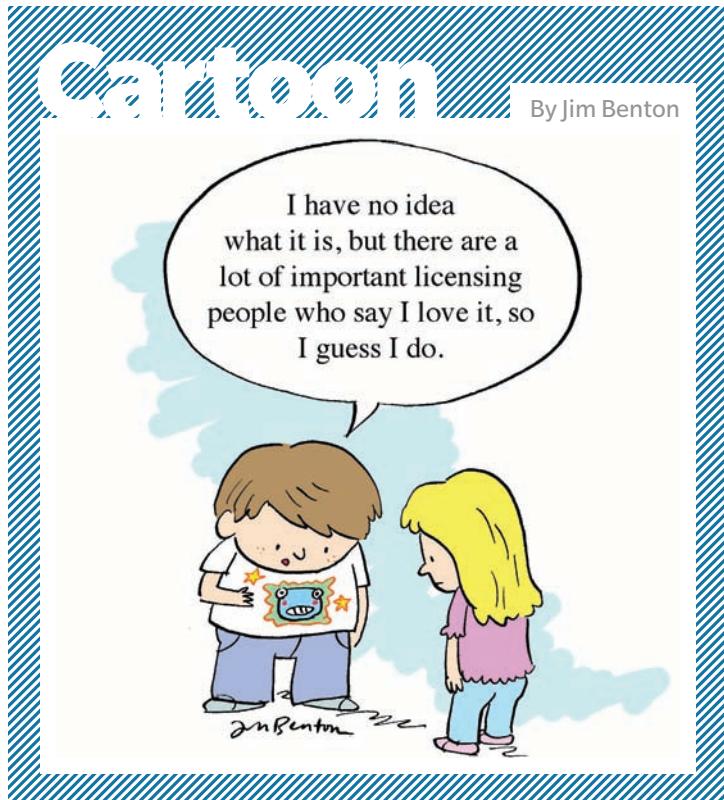
Why take note The range features an inflatable shell, with an attached drive mechanism that sits underneath, and can be controlled by a handset. The devices are safe to use indoors and out, and can be manipulated to perform full 360-degree spins and other aerial stunts. The shells are also collapsible and interchangeable with the drive frame, potentially creating a new licensing category. "That way we can sell upgrades, and it creates a sense of collectibility as well," says Morgan. The initial line features monster trucks, racing cars, diggers and robots. Currently, Bladez has one licensing deal with London's Bulldog Licensing for a range of Monster Jam branded trucks that will be on US mass-market shelves in 2012, while an exclusive generic line will be available at UK retailer Hamleys this fall.

Down to business The individual Bladez kits will likely retail for US\$34.99 apiece and include a foot pump, inflatable shell and handset. Individual shells will also be sold, but pricing has not been finalized for them yet. "We have a dual strategy," says Morgan. "We want to get into the under-eight market because the devices are easy enough to use. But we also want to have adult retro themes for the gadget enthusiasts."

Next up In terms of licensing, Morgan says the company is in early talks with three different licensees and is interested in evergreen properties that will work in the long term. While licensed product will likely edge up the price-point a bit, he says that it will also help expand retail distribution. —Gary Rusak



At almost 20 inches tall, Bladez Toys' Pump & Play range is looking to shake up the RC market



The cotillion of consumer products, a.k.a. Licensing Show, is upon us and attendees can expect to see a number of familiar faces in unfamiliar booths. One of the most notable shifts is ex-Mattel Brands president **Niel Friedman's** move to specialty giant Toys 'R' Us. He's been tapped as president of the retailer's US business and is now looking after merchandising, marketing, store operations, merchandise presentation, global sourcing and product development for the company's 866 US stores and online business. We suspect you're going to start seeing a lot more DTR deals with key licensors as

nabbed marketing exec **Graham Sim** as creative director for its children's division, starting on July 4. Formerly group marketing director for retailer HMV, Sim is leading the children's marketing and publicity team and will work closely with editorial on brand strategy for the division. Another part of his remit is branding, digital marketing, social media, CRM management, consumer analytics, e-commerce and licensing. In fact, Penguin's licensing business is becoming increasingly significant for the company, growing by 17% in 2010 sales, thanks in part to partnerships with social networking

from MTV/Nickelodeon Consumer Products, where she served as VP of emerging markets and business development for EMEA (London). And back in the US, **Jennifer Bennett [B]** is piloting the launch of British preschool property Peppa Pig as brand owner Entertainment One's VP of licensing and merchandise for North America. Bennett is leading the newly created North American licensing division from L.A. The former CCI Entertainment exec is looking to build out a similarly successful Peppa program on the heels of the series launch on Nick Jr. US earlier this year.

US. Karp hops over from Massiverse, where he was head of global licensing for transmedia boys action property Dragons Vs Robots. And in TV moves, **Chin-won Chang [D]** is taking the reins as GM of Cartoon Network Korea, assuming responsibility for the network's revenue, ratings and brand presence. Chang will also be responsible for the development and implementation of new non-television business ventures, including licensing and interactive. With more than 10 years in the children's entertainment industry, Chang was most recently GM of Tooniverse, where

part, Swartz is returning to his roots in alternative series creation as an independent producer. Before moving over to CN, Swartz was VP of alternative programming at US cablenet SyFy, where he oversaw the Ghost Hunters franchise.

With the paperwork stamped and sealed on Canadian provincial pubcaster The Knowledge Network's acquisition of its interest in BBC Kids Canada from Shaw Media, **Lisa Purdy** is stepping in as channel director. She's now responsible for strengthening the BBC Kids brand and marketing the commercial-free channel to increase

people



Friedman puts his rolodex and vast knowledge of toy manufacturing to work.

Meanwhile, over at Mattel rival Jakks Pacific, long-time exec **Jennifer Richmond**, SVP of licensing and media, has left the company. **Lauren White-head**, with eight years at Jakks under her belt, has taken over as the new VP of licensing. Also departing the toyco is **Genna Rosenberg**. The former SVP of communications has taken up a new post as EVP of strategic marketing, communications and business development at Imperial Toy. She's been appointed to play a key role in expanding the company's licensed and non-licensed portfolios.

Over at UK publishing house and licensee Penguin, the company has

brands like Moshi Monsters and Club Penguin.

On the licensor front, there's been movement at Zodiak Rights. The UK office has snapped up Nickelodeon exec **Jennifer Lawlor [A]** as its SVP of strategy and planning for consumer products. Lawlor is the first to hold the post and joins with a wide-ranging remit to oversee the implementation of Zodiak Rights' and Zodiak Kids' product and brand strategy for its UK portfolio. She will oversee the global rollout of programs built on preschool shows *Waybuloo* (currently licensed to more than 80 countries worldwide), *Tic Toc House* (working title) for Nickelodeon, and *Mister Maker*, the CBeebies arts & craft show. Lawlor hails

She will also be responsible for spearheading North American licensing programs for other eOne properties from the TV, film and music divisions.

Also moving full-speed into the American market is the Moshi Monsters brand. Property owner Mind Candy has set up a New York-based office, putting licensing vet **Eric Karp [C]** at the helm. Karp is stepping in as head of licensing Americas, tasked with developing, expanding and rolling out a US licensing program for Moshi Monsters and building a team to drive growth for the brand within the territory. The pet-themed virtual community currently boasts nearly 40 million users worldwide, around a third of which are based in the

he launched a children's portal site, Tooniland, and an online game version of Keroro.

And after three years spent largely heading up Cartoon Network's foray into live-action programming, VP of original series **Rob Swartz [E]** has left the network. On the heels of Swartz's departure, VPs Nick Weidenfeld and Tramm Wigzell, who head up development at the comedy and action groups, respectively, are now reporting directly to chief content officer Rob Sorcher. Curtis Lelash, meanwhile, is looking after comedy animation development for kids, and all current animated series production, working under Weidenfeld. For his

viewership and subscribers. With a new look on-air, the net will include Canada's first CBeebies preschool programming block.

Finally, animation exec **Dana Booton** has been upped to the newly created role of GM and head of production at Starz Media-owned Film Roman. Booton now leads production at the California-based studio, which produces animation for *The Simpsons*, *King of the Hill*, *The Super Hero Squad Show*, *Dan Vs.* and preschool series *Wow! Wow! Wubbzy!* Booton brings with her more than 20 years of executive experience and steps up from the role of VP of production at Film Roman.



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Direct hits?

Newbie toon platforms set up web-only kids content hubs to build viewership

BY KATE CALDER



MoshiTV, currently in pre-launch mode, plans to bring previously unseen content to the more than 40 million registered users on virtual world MoshiMonsters.com

F

rom indie live-action adventure series to broadcaster-supported content, it's almost impossible to keep up with the number of series being created exclusively for the web. And along with these fledgling shows blazing their own trails online has come a handful of upstart web initiatives looking to become the YouTube of kids video viewing. We've ID'd three upstart online platforms that are vying for kid viewers and building their own unique business models.

The viral vehicle

Mind Candy, the company responsible for sprawling virtual world hit Moshi Monsters, is gearing up to launch its own content platform MoshiTV later this year. The plan is to add web-exclusive, video-on-demand programming from third-party producers to its growing well of Moshi Monster and user-generated content.

Darran Garnham, head of licensing at Mind Candy, says he's been approached by traditional TV broadcasters interested in bringing the Moshi Monsters brand into their fold with offers ranging from producing a series to acquiring Moshi content. "But they couldn't add more to our penetration," contends Garnham, who along with Mind Candy president Michael Action Smith, is adamant that the next wave of kids breakout properties will evolve virally online.

At the same time, the company is well aware that scores of producers passed over by broadcasters at markets are eager to get their content in front of an audience. "Just walking around

Cannes, I saw small production companies with content that might never see the light of day," says Garnham. So the company's alternative channel model MoshiTV is intending to provide producers with an introduction to MoshiMonsters.com's more than 40 million registered users, primarily kids ages 6 to 12.

Mind Candy also has Moshi clips and videos to add to the platform, as well as a future series in early development. And after being courted by a number of prodcos and distributors, Garnham says Mind Candy decided instead to turn the model on its head. "We said, 'We'd like to hear more about how you'd distribute our brand, however, what have you got that you might want to put on our platform?'"

Garnham says Mind Candy is open to all formats, but points to humorous shorts, along the lines of NHK's *Domo* interstitials, as content that would work particularly well for the platform. (Programming will be screened and certified as safe and appropriate kid-friendly content before it's uploaded.)

MoshiTV also plans to offer a social element that allows kids to comment, rate and recommend shows to their friends. "Instead of a commissioning broadcaster determining what's best, the children will say whether or not they like a show," says Garnham. "So the most-watched shows will rise to the top, much like what YouTube has done in the adult world." And based on reaction from kid viewers themselves, Mind Candy aims to invest in those top-rated MoshiTV properties to expand on content and work up corresponding licensing and merchandising plans.

Garnham says the company is working out plans for an economic model that tries to steer clear of relying on advertising. "We've been approached by a number of companies to advertise within Moshi, and to date that's something we haven't done because the minute we start to commercialize in that way, you risk the kids' trust," says Garnham.

Revenue models under consideration include involvement in co-productions and licensing plans on third-party content, charging fees to content providers interested in reaching Moshi's audience, and exclusive paid membership perks that give users access to the newest programming. For the time being, however, MoshiTV will be free for producers and 75% free for kids to build up a strong channel model, though Garnham couldn't release exact rates at press time.

"To begin with, it's not all about the revenue side of things, it's about getting the model right," says Garnham.

The equal opportunist

L.A.-based Animation Development Company's Toon Goggles is also offering a platform that boasts the potential to unearth a few gems that for one reason or another went unnoticed at markets.

"There have to be about a thousand cartoons a year that don't get picked up at MIP by networks," says ADC partner Ira Warren. And the need for a platform that acts both as a portal for kids to watch new content and as a test market for producers was borne from Toonzone's own experience in shopping its *Action Dad* pilot around in 2008. (The series will air on France's Canal+ Family and Télétoon France in 2012.)



Let's not forget YouTube

While a crop of new web-based channel startups might be ambitiously vying for kids' attention, Madrid, Spain's Zinkia is one entertainment company that went straight to several established general online platforms, namely YouTube, to propel the online presence of its hit preschool property Pocoyo.

Create your own channel...

MD of brand and business development Maria Doolan says the Pocoyo-branded channel gets 38 million hits a month on YouTube, racking up more than 450 million hits over the last two years. In the US alone, Pocoyo is currently fielding seven million hits per month, up from the initial rate of 70,000 it attracted when that country's channel went live in January 2010. Maintenance, with the continual rollout of new content, including promos, commercials, episodes and user-generated extras is what keeps bringing back viewers, says Doolan.

...and get to know your viewers

By tracking user demographics, Zinkia saw that Pocoyo shorts and promos were resonating with young adults—not just the targeted preschoolers and caregivers—thanks to the series' strong character design and layered humor. Based on this intel, the company created an app in 2010 that more than 11 million people have used to Pocoyo-fy pictures of themselves.

"You have to dedicate resources to online exploitation and manage it as one more piece of the puzzle the same way you would DVDs or publishing," says Doolan.

—Kate Calder

Enter Toon Goggles (toongoggles.com) an online channel that lets kids stream trailers, clips and full eps of animated series deemed appropriate for all ages.

Every Toon Goggles user sets up a landing page where he or she can add up to 100 cartoons to their toon strip. Kids can then send each other content from their strips, make recommendations and comment through the site's social network.

Meanwhile, content producers have their own back-end pages that provide data analytics and professional networking features for free. In compliance with US COPPA regulations, information on individual kids is kept confidential, but rights holders can see the age of kids watching their shows and how they view and share the content. Similar to business networking site LinkedIn, producers and buyers will be able to track references and communicate with each other.

At press time, Toon Goggles had content from 20 companies ready to be screened for the May 31 launch. Once the platform has a stable base of 50 to 100 series, and a healthy viewership, Warren says the site will open up a revenue model that allows rights holders to pay for premium placement, as well as phase-in access for traditional advertisers.

The indie incubator

Last summer, UK broadcaster CBBC expanded its Cartoon Works web portal to host a mini-site My Toons (bbc.co.uk/cbbc/cartoonworks/mytoons) that showcases animated

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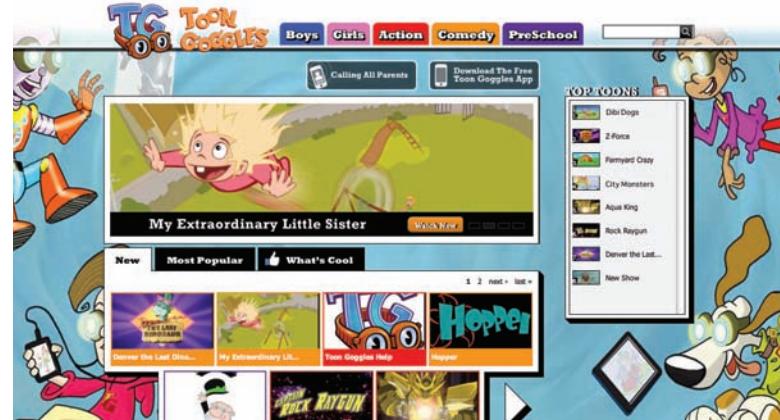
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shorts from around the globe. Sure, as an offshoot of the country's highest-rated kidnet, the site had a headstart. But within four weeks of its launch, My Toons had helped bump up traffic across most of CBBC's animation-based sites by 50% to become a destination in and of itself, proving the appeal of web-exclusive content to the six to 12 set. Over the last year the site has hosted close to 200 shorts, 59% of which were produced in the UK.

Though promoting and supporting homegrown UK animation was the initial *raison d'être* of My Toons, head of CBBC acquisitions and drama development Sarah Muller explains the interest in the site pushed her network to include more content from around the world and act as a showcase for something "that wasn't normally available for our audience."

Single pieces of content varying in length from 10 seconds to just under four minutes are what works best for My Toons. And the CBBC acquisitions team has taken on new animation from sources ranging from budding under-18 animators and experienced independents to established studios. Muller says the variety has given My Toons a YouTube-like sense of novelty and surprise in a safer environment for kids.

Every week, My Toons features a new set of five shorts, and the five from the preceding week join a see-more-videos area at the bottom of the page. My Toons generally has a three-month license in order to keep the content on the site



Toon Goggles lets kids rate and share content to see what shows rise to the top

fresh. The most successful shorts, determined by measuring views and compiling kids' ratings scores, are presented as a branded 15-minute block that runs on CBBC on special occasion days throughout the year. "We had a core audience that stayed very loyal, but our main traffic would come in bursts around the specials," says Muller.

Going forward Muller and her team are working on commissioning a second season of My Toons that will take into consideration the ratings as well as how the site has proven effective in supporting the UK animation industry. Muller says she hopes to continue the search for UK's breakthrough young animators and keep looking for possible new series for development. **K**

On the Set

Hannah Montana writers find freedom in Canada



Torri Webster, who plays Tess, gets into character on the Toronto set of *Life with Boys*

There's nothing like the heightened focus and quiet hush that falls over a studio when the director calls "Action!" Through a wall of cameras, portable monitors and crew members on the Toronto, Canada-based set of *Life with Boys*, I strain to catch a glimpse of two small, hyper-styled young actresses as they enter a brightly lit kitchen set.

The 22 x half-hour series being produced by Nelvana and Corus Entertainment for Corus kidnet YTV is about a 13-year-old girl named Tess who, besides dealing with the typical stress of teen life, lives in a household with her overprotective dad and three brothers.

As the actors who play Tess and pal Allie deliver lines, series creator Michael Poryes, exec producer Steven Peterman and head writer Douglas Lieblein watch the monitors and then confer with the director between takes to get the comic timing just right.

Having worked together for several years on Disney mega-hit *Hannah Montana*, Poryes, Peterman and Lieblein not only have a polished collaborative process, but they also let the schtick fly, frequently levelling dry one-liners and ironic barbs at one another during our lunchbreak meeting in the writers' room.

A key aspect of *Life with Boys*, says Poryes, was his departure from developing a show based on a hook. Tess doesn't have any supernatural abilities and she isn't a famous rock star—she's just a regular girl who happens to live in a home populated by boys. Accordingly, the episodes explore how boys and girls see things differently and inevitably get their wires crossed, naturally leading to a lot of laughs.

"American broadcasters want a hook," says Poryes, which led the trio to Canada to collaborate with YTV and Corus. "It gave us the freedom to try something different and to write something that relies more on dialogue and characters," he adds.

Nelvana Enterprises is distributing the series in Canada, Latin America, Africa, Asia (excluding Japan) and France. Classic Media and Helion Pictures will cover distribution across all media in all other territories worldwide. —Kate Calder

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Betting on sports and laughs

Disney XD puts the polish on international programming

The challenge With the competition to engage boy viewers tougher than ever, two-year-old, boy-targeted Disney XD is ramping up its international programming strategy to grow the brand's audience and ratings on a worldwide stage. Reaching more than 78 million households in the US alone, the channel also operates in the UK, France, Spain, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Poland, Greece, Turkey, Latin America, Japan, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, The Netherlands—and now Canada.

The plan Disney bumped former VP of worldwide programming strategy David Levine up to the brand-new post of GM and VP of programming for Disney XD Worldwide in March. It was a natural move as Levine led the task force to launch Disney XD State-side and helped facilitate its global rollout. Now he's working with Disney XD channels around the world to develop original content and make acquisitions. He's also leading the strategic direction of the multi-platform Disney XD brand and 24-hour, ad-supported channel in the US.

The programming The channel is premiering new content over the summer, including live-action comedy *Kickin' It* from L.A.-based It's a Laugh Productions and futuristic animated series *Motorcity*, produced by Disney Television Animation and L.A.-based Titmouse. Animated series *Ultimate Spider-Man* is headlining the new upcoming Marvel programming block, and *Tron: Uprising* will also premiere in 2012. Returning series include second seasons of *Pair of Kings* and *Kick Buttowski*.

Levine says he'll be looking for future acquisitions that sit well with the brand and deliver on the Disney XD values of helping boys grow up by providing strong, aspirational lead characters. "We have a great slate of action-adventure and comedy coming down the pike and we'd also like to find some additional comedy series," he notes.

Getting game Sticking to its mandate of broadening its appeal and interest with boys, the channel is deepening its connection with sports. In April, Disney XD launched *NBA Fit*, a six-episode series produced by NBA Entertainment that stars a roster of top-notch pro basketball players and features insider training tips while promoting health and fitness.

The net is also incorporating sports content into its regular series, with recent sports-themed episodes of *Phineas and Ferb* and *Kick Buttowski* that starred Orlando Magic player Dwight Howard. As well, this summer's *Kickin' It* is set in a martial arts academy and features black-belt actor Leo Howard.

"It's a cool way to bring martial arts to our audience that is appropriate for our demographic and is organically part of the storytelling," says Levine. The channel is also working its connection with sister network ESPN for a presence at this summer's X Games. "Action sports is popular in a lot of countries around the world, so using X Games as a way to bring that to our audience is a natural fit," says Levine. "It's content that we can share around the world."

Levine says the channel will produce short-form content that reflects local sports in different territories, and is working on creating more promotions through local sporting events. For example, *Kickin' It* will have a branded presence at 20 regional competitions through the US, working directly with local martial arts leagues to create *Kickin' It* themed promotions.

Next moves Disney XD is looking to expand into markets in the Asia-Pacific region in the future. In the meantime, the acquisitions team, led by L.A.-based director of acquisitions and co-productions Karen Miller, continues to search for content across all Disney Channels brands. —Kate Calder

Northern exposure

Disney XD lands in Canada

On the first of June, Disney XD launches in Canada, continuing the unique relationship the House of Mouse has with Astral Media as the only third-party media company that holds a license to Disney-branded channels. For more than 25 years, Toronto-based Astral has had an output deal with Family Channel and access to Disney's original programming. And fresh from rebranding Playhouse Disney as Disney Junior last month, SVP and GM of Astral Kids Joe Tedesco says the timing was right to focus on the launch of ad-supported Disney XD.

CanCon, eh?

Disney XD is debuting with Canadian-produced series including *Wingin' It* (Temple Street Productions) and *What's up Warthogs!* (Dolphin Entertainment) which currently airs on Astral's Family Channel. "It's a property that we developed with the anticipation of XD coming into the marketplace," says Tedesco.

Sporty spicing

Keeping in line with the channel's focus on sports, XD Canada is operating two grassroots programs this summer. The net is sponsoring the inaugural West 49 LRN2SK8 Tour that will travel to more than 30 locations and feature skateboard demos from Canada's hotly tipped boarding stars. The channel has also been tapped as the youth broadcast partner of NBA Jam Session. In August, the NBA roadshow is visiting six Canadian locations with the Harlem Globetrotters and league personalities in tow. —Kate Calder



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Poppy Cat

Coolabi's cross-continental creation scores on both sides of the pond



For a series that launched in the UK on Nick Jr. at the beginning of last month, it's too early to relay ratings news on *Poppy Cat*. However, the 52 x 11-minute preschool show produced by UK-based Coolabi and King Rollo Films had already fast-tracked its way to a raft of licensing agreements and international sales well before its debut. Notably it landed a spot on 24-hour preschool channel PBS Kids Sprout, which airs in more than 50 million US households. Based on a book series created by Brit author Lara Jones that sold more than 2.5 million copies worldwide, the show is about the imaginative tales a young girl spins for her cat, Poppy. Over the course of each ep, she imagines fantastical animal characters that embark on extraordinary adventures to magical destinations such as the marshmallow mines and the trumpet tree forest.

On-air



Dual citizenship "I've never known a UK show like this one to sell to a US platform before airing in its own territory," says Coolabi director of content Michael Dee. He explains the series was created to appeal to both sides of the pond right from the start. The company hired show runners based in L.A., an educational advisor from New York and used writers and production studios in the UK. "After Nick Jr. UK picked it up, we wanted to give ourselves the best chance at narrative, and it was important for us to have US storytelling talent," says Dee. Initial roundtable brainstorming sessions in London resulted in a collaborative exchange in which the writers became conscious of incorporating both North American and British sensibilities and nuances. The cross-continental writing process also zipped along at a fast clip, with the UK writing team sending scripts to L.A. to be edited overnight and sent back.

Full disclosure Brought on-board as global TV distribution partner, Cake Entertainment MD Ed Galton admits that daily conversations with the Coolabi team take a step beyond the traditional producer/distributor relationship, and it has helped build a brand that can transcend multiple territories.

At press time, Galton was gearing up for a discussion with the brand's UK licensees and yet-to-be-announced home entertainment partner. He explains the back-and-forth conversations have allowed Coolabi to share information about product lines and rollout plans with merchandising partners. And for its part, Cake keeps the prodco up to speed on upcoming territory launches. The two companies are also keen to tap into each other's key relationships that span broadcasters and licensing partners. "It keeps us all informed and helps us better inform our potential clients for pitches," says Galton.

Done deals Pre-MIPTV Coolabi had already signed a book publishing tie-in with pubco MacMillan that will hit UK stores this fall. Most recently, the company announced toy manufacturer Golden Bear as the master toy partner for the UK and Ireland, covering plush, plastics and arts & crafts to launch in fall 2012. Other deals include a spring 2012 preschool nightwear and underwear line from Aykroyd and TDP, an outerwear deal with Silver-Knit, and a series of games and puzzles from Jumbo Games, also to launch in 2012.

Promo partnering To create hype for the new series, Coolabi has worked with Nick Jr.'s PR team to launch a consumer campaign across TV, radio, magazines and pop-culture websites that appeals to preschoolers as well as their parents. The broadcaster also allocated major media real estate to launch with promos on-air and online, as well as streaming the first ep on its website. The pair also worked in tandem to create both the official website (poppycat.com) and the microsite at Nickjr.co.uk, and plan to further the digital strategy with a parents page on Facebook. Discussions are underway with Sprout for similar initiatives to support the launch both on-air, off-air and online. —Kate Calder

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Italian families favor free-to-air

With a huge distribution advantage over satellite, DTT is giving relative newcomers to the kids broadcast scene a chance to flourish

Ben 10 rates high on leading DTT channel Boing



The 20 or so kids channels on Italy's broadcast dial make it one of the most competitive territories in Europe. Among the country's specialty youth channels, which make up close to 25% of its total channel universe, free dedicated DTT children's channels Boing and K2 lead in market share for the four to 14s. The top dog is Boing. The Turner/Mediaset co-venture is in front with a 6.8% market share of youth viewers, and following close behind is Switchover Media's relative newcomer K2. (The two-year-old 24-hour kids network is aimed at kids and families with a strong boy audience.) RaiSat Yoyo, pubcaster Rai's DTT channel for kids and teens, sits in third place with a 3.1% share.

Eurodata's Julia Esperance explains free-to-air DTT channels rank highest because they benefit from wide distribution compared to the limited penetration and extremely competitive pay-TV landscape. Boing is also available on satellite, and K2 can be viewed on satellite and terrestrial platforms.

The most frequently broadcast shows on Boing include *Titeuf*, *Ben 10* and *H2O*, while K2's *Pokémon*, toon *Mr Bean* and *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* are aired most often. On Disney Channel, the best-performing pay channel of the dedicated kids outlets, *Hannah Montana*, *Sonny with a Chance*, *The Jonas Brothers* and *Phineas and Ferb* get the most airtime.

Esperance notes that Disney Channel is also available on DTT and satellite, while nets such as Boomerang, Nickelodeon and Nick Jr. are available solely via satellite, accounting for their significantly smaller market shares.

And with Italian kids content being co-produced pretty much exclusively with terrestrial broadcasters Rai and Mediaset, Italian children end up consuming a high dose of international fare on other dedicated kids channels.

Looking at the entire Italian broadcast universe, Mediaset-owned Italia 1 and Canale 5 stand as the top channels with children ages four to 14. Of these two, only Italia 1 actually carries kids-specific programming.

The only other general terrestrial channel

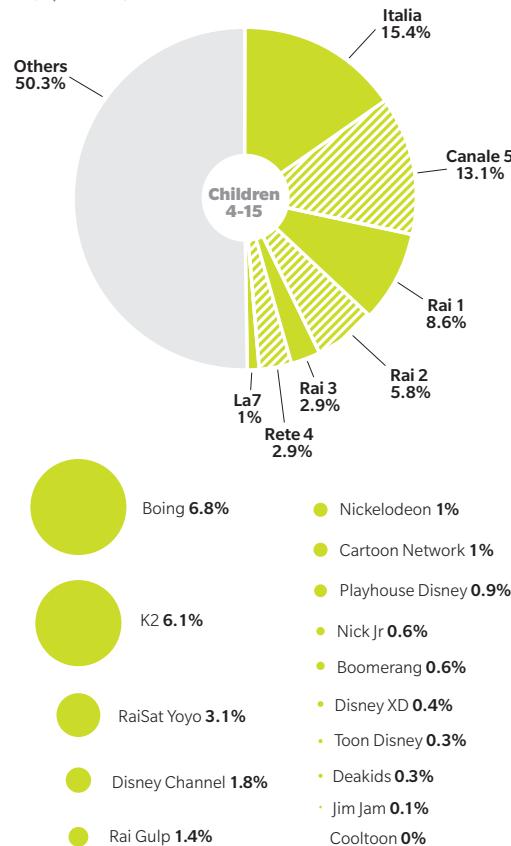
airing children's programming is Rai 2, which ranks fourth in the total number of kid viewers.

Top-rated children's shows on Italia 1 include *The Simpsons*, *Futurama*, *SpongeBob SquarePants* and *Suite Life On Deck*. Rai 2's most popular kids shows are *The Jungle Book*, *Sea Princesses* and Italian productions *PopPixie* and *l'Albero Azzurro*.

Esperance explains that much like other European territories, Italian families watch primetime programming together on free-to-air general channels. For all programs combined, the top-rated shows among kids in April 2011 included Italian variety series *Il Lene Show* and *Fenomenal* and game show *Transformat*. Applying that same criteria to Canale 5 also yields of a list of Italian primetime shows, including *Zelig*, *Strisca La Notizia* and *Grande Fratello*, the Italian version of *Big Brother*. —Kate Calder

Market share

(April 2011)



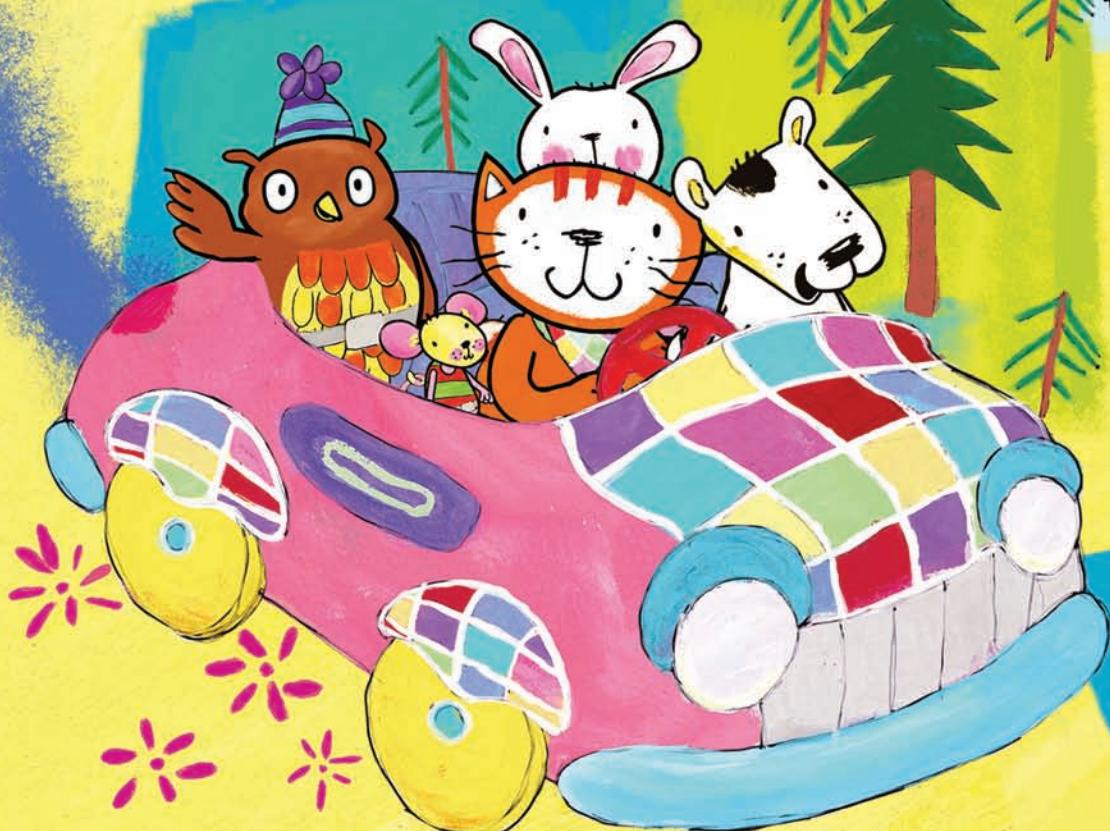
Eurodata TV Worldwide is a French company specializing in TV audience ratings research and market intelligence that offers TV data as well as expertise and insight into the performance of TV shows in more than 90 countries. Ratings information is provided directly by research institutes in each country, which, like Eurodata's parent company Médiamétrie, measure daily television audience ratings. For more information, contact deputy sales director Joanna Szybist (jszybist@eurodatatv.com, 33-1-4758-9434).



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Pipeline

An early peek at shows on the development track



Kids 6-11

Style: 2D animation

Format: 26 x half hours

Budget: US\$300,000 to US\$400,000 per ep

Status: Production is slated to start next month for Canadian kidcaster Teletoon. A digital media component, including a site where users choose their camp, interact and watch online eps, is in development.

Camp Lakebottom The kids at Camp Lakebottom know how to make the best of a strange situation—even when their counselors happen to be a band of zombies and mutants. Situated on the aptly named Lake Ickygloomy, the camp is built on an old munitions lot and adjoining toxic waterfront. Seemingly innocent activities that turn out to be treacherous survival tests only add to zany thrills like riding a giant mosquito or taking an entire cabin waterskiing behind a lake monster. On the other side of the lake's pristine shores, meanwhile, sits Camp Sunnyside Up, populated by pampered types who'd be happy to see the demise of lowbrow Lakebottom. The series' antics are fueled by feuding brother/sister duo McGee, Camp Lakebottom's 12-year-old happy-go-lucky thrill seeker, and Suzi, his older and over-achieving sis who thrives on Sunnyside Up's polished veneer. Prodigy Skywriter Media & Entertainment Group is working with fellow Toronto, Canada-based animation studio Jam Filled to bring the series to life.



Survival Stars Durbin, South Africa-based wildlife film specialist Earth-Touch is branching out from its usual non-fiction fare and has repurposed some of its recent wildlife footage for a kid-targeted series. In packaging the material for children, the in-house creative team at the studio framed each episode with animated intros and interstitials, and added a heavy dose of comedy to the fast-paced, 11-minute scripts giving, zany, tongue-in-cheek voiceovers to the on-screen animal action. Nevertheless, the content is also educational, imparting information about different facets of the animal kingdom. The first episode on animal homes includes a toilet humor-laced explanation about how birds use manure to build their nests, and shows a snake on the prowl for eggs while the legless reptile professes via voiceover that it's really just a big harmless worm, and there's nothing to worry about.

Kids 6-11

Style: Live-action footage with 2D animation

Format: 26 x 11 minutes

Budget: Using the studio's archival material, the completion budget is approximately US\$50,000 per episode.

Status: Four episodes have been completed, and Earth-Touch is on the verge of signing a European broadcaster.



Kids 6-11

Style: CGI animation

Format: 26 x 1.5-minute eps and a 52-minute TV movie

Budget: US\$2.3 million for the shorts and movie

Status: French and English versions of the movie and shorts will be delivered in August and September, respectively. More than 20 presales are lined up in territories including Italy, Germany, Scandinavia, Belgium, the UK and Latin America. The DVD is set for a Q1 2012 launch in France, Italy, Germany, the UK, Spain and the US. A 52 x 11-minute series is also set to start production in 2012.

The Jungle Bunch Told through the docu-style lens of a video journalist, *The Jungle Bunch* from Toulouse, France-based TAT Productions is a short-format series and TV movie that takes a candid behind-the-scenes look at a community of jungle dwellers. At the center of the pack is Maurice, a misplaced penguin raised by a tigress who is convinced that he is really a tiger, despite the fact that he has to continually repaint his stripes. A small tiger fish has the misfortune of being his adopted son and the subject of repeated lectures on the penguin's preferred hunting techniques. Episodes also feature Maurice's friends, a sweet-natured gorilla, a singing warthog, a paranoid tarsier, an odd-couple set of twin toads and a bat who is afraid of the dark. France Télévisions is a financier, Paris-based PGS Entertainment is on-board as distributor, and Universal has DVD distribution rights.

NowTrending Media

What's bubbling up in kid content culture



6 Years Old
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Watching kids watching

Creating online content for kids? Check out YouTube channel Kids React to see just what children think of some of the most popular internet memes making the rounds online this year. See just how boys and girls of different ages engage, for example, with Rebecca Black, and watch confused faces try to understand all the hoopla over that awesome "Double Rainbow" video.

Making sweet lemonade

Filling the void left by *High School Musical*, Disney's new original music-themed movie *Lemonade Mouth* is sweeping the kid charts with a cast of fresh tween idols. The movie, based on the novel of the same name about five teens who meet in detention and form a band, is already the year's most-watched original US cable movie among kids six to 15, delivering 7.1 million viewers with its April 15 premiere (live and DVR playback). Additionally, the soundtrack debuted at number-one on iTunes' soundtrack chart. Author Mark Peter Hughes has a sequel on the way, and there is talk of a concert tour. Dare we say another full-fledged Disney brand has just been hatched?

Tracking the chatter

Online social media platform Wikia, created by the co-founder of Wikipedia, has more than 200,000 different community areas where members write, edit and upload content. And boy, do tweens and teens talk about TV shows on the site! Generating the most Wikia chatter among these demos is Fox's *Glee* with 4.1 million monthly page views. Nickelodeon's *iCarly* (1.7 million) and TeenNick's *Degrassi* (1.1 million) aren't doing too badly, either. Interestingly, the *Glee* Wikia averages 7,657 comments a month—behind *iCarly*'s 10,545 W—and welcomes approximately 436,000 unique visitors per month, trumped by *iCarly*'s 477,000. —Kate Calder



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Double the fun

BY GARY RUSAK

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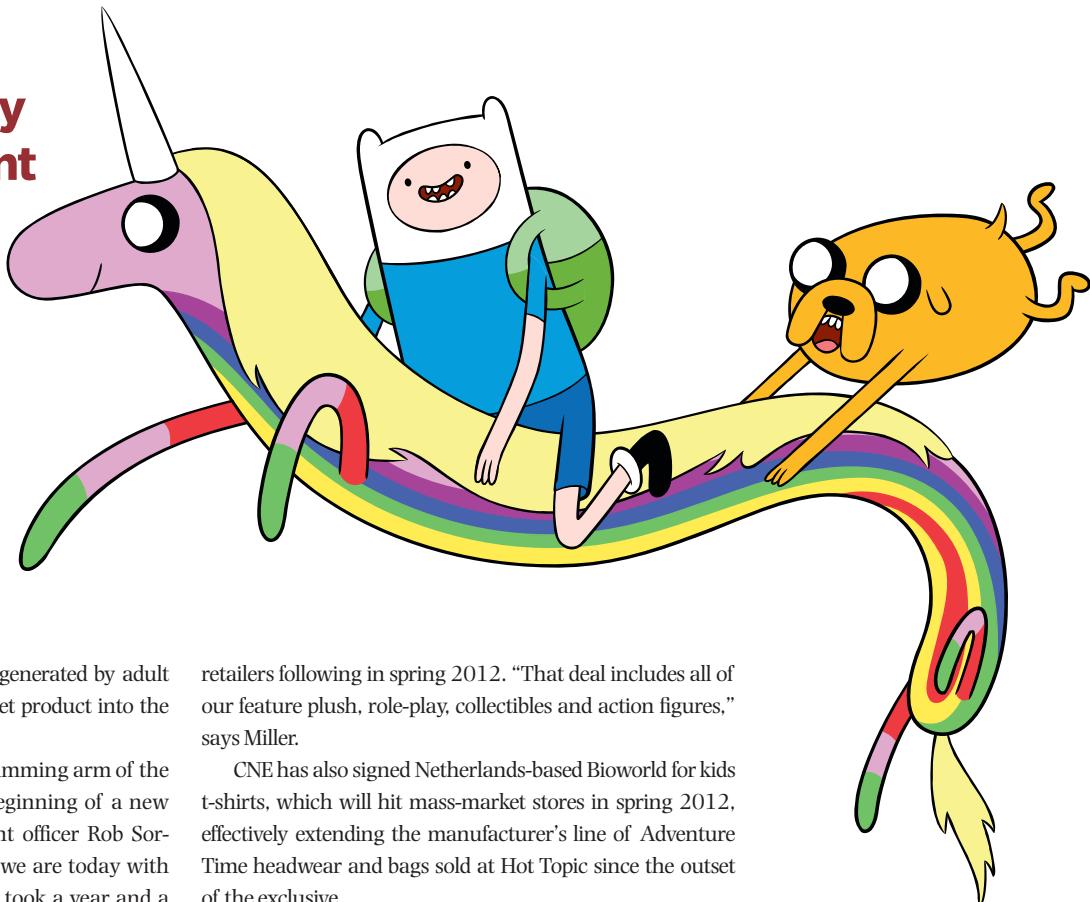
hat started out in 2008 as a quirky seven-minute animated short about a boy and his shape-shifting dog, from Frederator Studios, has grown into a cultural touchstone that has inspired a wide-reaching audience that moves from kids right through to in-the-know adults and pop-culture junkies. Since bowing on Cartoon Network in April 2010, *Adventure Time* has blossomed into a full 52-episode series, watched by an estimated 40 million people in its first season. And not surprisingly, it's a high priority for Cartoon Network Enterprises going into Licensing Show.

Moving forward, CNE is crafting an innovative multi-tiered licensing effort to capture the unique appeal of the series. "It just has a captivating feel and a really wide-ranging audience," says Christina Miller, SVP of sports marketing, programming and strategy for CNE and Turner

CNE takes a two-pronged CP approach to breakout comedy *Adventure Time*

"Everything has my stamp on it...I want to see princess lipstick—that would be funny!"

—Pendleton Ward, creator of Adventure Time



Broadcasting. In fact, the internet buzz generated by adult fans convinced Miller and her team to get product into the market a.s.a.p.

It's a sentiment echoed by the programming arm of the network. "To me, it really marks the beginning of a new wave of animation," says chief content officer Rob Sorcher. "I'm particularly proud of where we are today with it. It's now a sustainable TV series that took a year and a half of very hard work—and a huge gamble that has really paid off."

Adventure Time now anchors CN's Monday night US lineup that features 15-minute time slots starting at 8 p.m. Additionally, a full half-hour episode airs on Thursdays. And in the coming months, the plan is to move it into a daily strip. "That will give us significant gains due to exposure and awareness, and will also be helped by all the ancillary activities that are planned in that time period," says Sorcher.

With a full content pipeline, CNE has been busy sewing up deals for a creative licensing program that soft-launched last year and will continue to roll out to new categories and demos over the next several quarters.

To engage the tween segment of the market, CNE has an exclusive softlines range at US mall-based specialty retailer Hot Topic, and plans to bolster the assortment later this year with tween t-shirts, knit tops and fleece from apparel manufacturer Mighty Fine. A host of other licensees like Hot Properties (magnets and key chains, available this summer), Mad Dog (kids sleepwear, available in spring 2012) and High IntenCity (jewelry, hair accessories and novelties, on shelves in the fall) have also been inked.

"The beauty of the brand is that it is scalable and wide-ranging," Miller says. "We have been able to expand our product range from young men, teens and juniors all the way up to adults."

Mass-market retailers, however, will be the home primarily for product aimed at the core-kid demo of six- to 11-year-olds. Master toy licensee Jazwares is making its initial line an exclusive at US Toys 'R' Us outlets this fall, with other mass

retailers following in spring 2012. "That deal includes all of our feature plush, role-play, collectibles and action figures," says Miller.

CNE has also signed Netherlands-based Bioworld for kids t-shirts, which will hit mass-market stores in spring 2012, effectively extending the manufacturer's line of *Adventure Time* headwear and bags sold at Hot Topic since the outset of the exclusive.

The older fan base—those who have taken it upon themselves to create numerous blogs and websites evoking and appropriating *Adventure Time* catchphrases like "The Ice King is an oxymoron"—is also a top priority for CNE. For this audience, the licensor has partnered with New York-based Nooka to launch a co-branded limited-edition wristwatch, and Threadless.com—the community-based online retailer that prints designs created by its patrons. This summer, fans will be asked to submit their own *Adventure Time* design, and Threadless will sell the winning model.

"It really gives the fans a voice," says Miller. "They will be able to create the product and the magic on their own. We can see that the more we empower them, the better it is for the brand in the marketplace."

In an effort to keep up program consistency, an endeavor complicated by the various retail tiers and demographics to which it caters, *Adventure Time* creator Pendleton Ward gets final approval on each product and is kept well in the loop with all of the CP extensions.

"Everything has my stamp on it," Ward says, adding that he would love to see a licensee develop a dog-shaped sleeping bag and a "princess" make-up line. "I want to see princess lipstick—that would be funny," he says. "There are so many princesses in the show, I think it would work."

While a number of deals have already been signed, CNE is still looking to augment the roster and is currently in talks with partners in additional categories like interactive and publishing. "We are also still filling out apparel for the younger age set," says Miller. "For us, it has to be the right product, not necessarily a lot of product." **K**

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PBS's new online shop featuring customizable products launched on May 24

Fund raising

PBS Kids launches online shop, toy line to support its programming efforts

PBS Kids is marking two significant firsts this summer with the launch of its fully dedicated e-commerce site and the introduction of an inaugural range of branded educational toys. The initiatives are expected to create new revenue streams that will help support the US public broadcaster.

The website (www.pbskidsshop.com) launched on May 24, and PBS senior director of licensing Dawn Ciccone says that the time was right to pull together the series it airs, like *Curious George*, *Cat in the Hat* and *Super Why!*, and put them all under one virtual roof.

"Moms have repeatedly asked us for this," Ciccone says. "They wanted to find a one-stop solution, so we created an umbrella for all PBS Kids brands." The site will feature products from all licensors with shows on PBS including The Jim Henson Company and Universal Studios.

The online store was developed with retail partner Brand-Xpand. The Chattanooga, Tennessee-based company purchased Ty's Toy Box in July 2010 and has continued to create the e-commerce boutiques and on-demand customized goods for which Ty's is known. (Founder Ty Simpson just left the venture, joining CafePress as director of licensing and business development in mid-May.) PBS Kids and Brand-Xpand inked their partnership deal in January, and have been developing the site and its offerings since.

"For some of our brands, the number of licensees has diminished," says Ciccone. "But this way we can create on-demand products such as water bottles, shirts and backpacks for any of the properties."

Ciccone says the on-demand aspect will also serve customers who are looking for secondary characters from PBS Kids series that are not usually found on merchandise. The

on-demand product is meant to "fill the gaps" in merch programs, and doesn't preclude IP owners from licensing those categories. In addition, customers will be given the option to personalize any product with a child's name at no additional cost.

A notable feature designed specifically for the PBS Kids online shop is the round-up option. It offers customers the choice to round their purchases up to the nearest dollar, with the additional money earmarked as a direct donation to the public broadcaster. In-stock items, meanwhile, ship within 24 hours, while on-demand products will likely ship within three days of purchase.

Jay Heavilon, president of Brand-Xpand, says PBS Kids made for an ideal partner because of the equity its brands have with US consumers and the lack of distribution some of them experience. "A lot of PBS brands don't get picked up by mass retail," he says. "So we can pick up the product that is available in the market, and also offer our on-demand service for those that are not."

Heavilon estimates on-demand products will make up 50% of sales, and adds that May was an optimal time to launch. "It gives us a couple of months so we can do predictive ordering leading into the end-of-year and holiday period," he says. "We will work with the license holders to see what they can do to assist with their online sales."

The launch will be promoted mostly through social networks, mommy blogs and PBS's parent website, which attracts about 10 million unique visitors each month. And in keeping with the pubcaster's commercial-free mission, the online store is not being promoted on-air.

In June, the site will also be among the first to offer an inaugural PBS Kids-branded educational toy line. The SKUs are decorated with PBS Kids mascots Dot and Dash and include blocks, puzzles and shape-sorters, all aimed at preschoolers who make up a good chunk of the channel's viewers. "We are always looking for new platforms to extend the reach of the brand," says Ciccone. —Gary Rusak

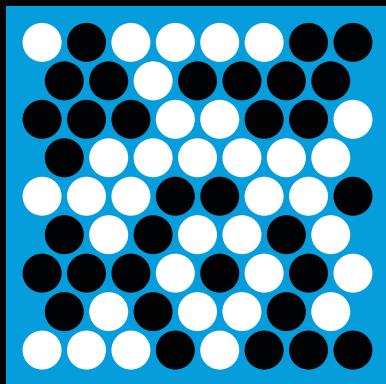
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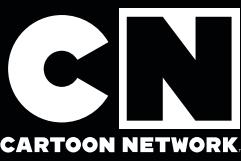
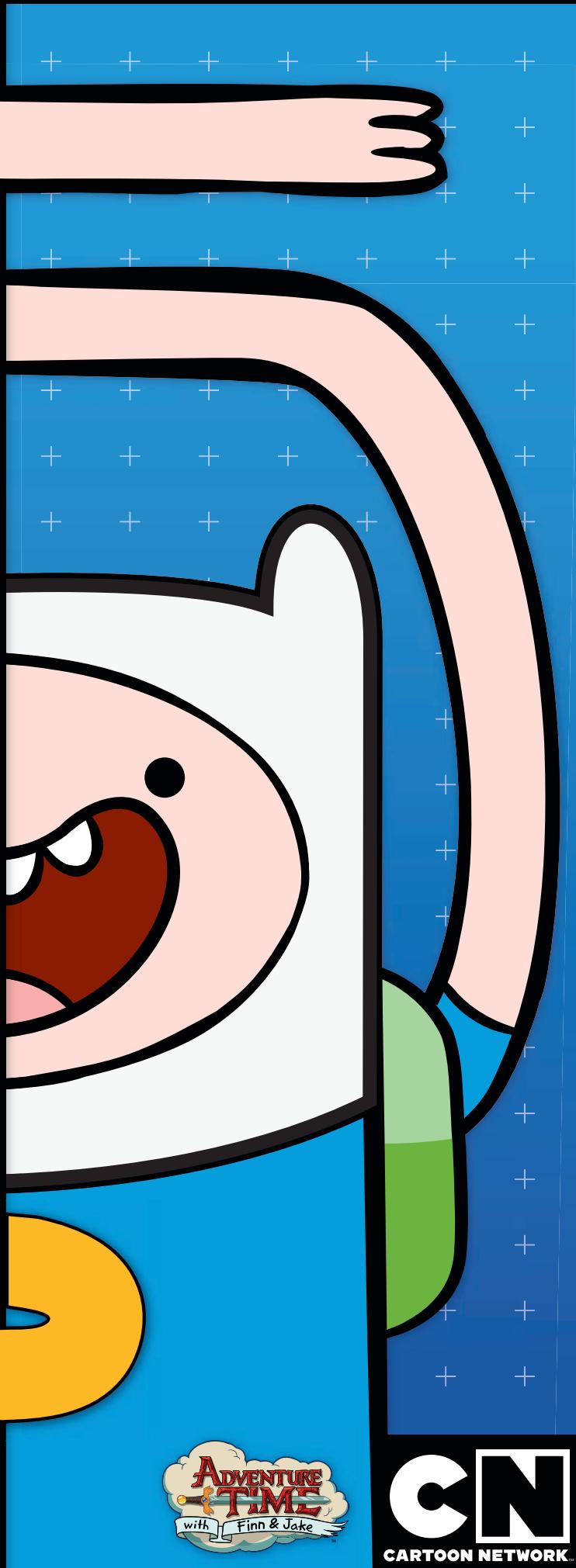
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Paramount banks on Tintin's universal appeal

Heading into Licensing Show, Paramount Pictures is pinning its bottom-line hopes on an iconic director and his vision for a world-famous boy and his dog. "When Steven Spielberg is directing a family film coming out during the holiday, you have a built-in interest," says LeeAnne Stables, EVP of worldwide marketing partnerships for Paramount Pictures and head of Paramount Licensing.

The Adventures of Tintin is, of course, based on the original publishing series by Belgian artist Herge, and is being brought to the big screen by Spielberg and Lord of the Rings director Peter Jackson in the producer's seat. Filmed using innovative motion-capture 3D technology from Jackson's company Weta Digital, the film stars Jamie Bell, Daniel Craig and Simon Pegg and is due in US theaters on December 23. In a unique move, the film will be released in European territories (where the original IP has higher recognition) in late October and early November, in advance of the US opening. "The earlier international releases will deliver a massive pre-awareness for the US market," says Stables.

With the licensing rights, Paramount has already amassed a roster of more than 50 licensees, global in scope. Since the movie is the first part of a projected three-picture arc, Stables says that potential licensees should be aware that the program will not be a typical summer blockbuster affair. "We are in the Tintin business for the long run," she contends.

The long list of licensees hits all tiers of retail, including specialty with Ravensburger (puzzles) and M6 Interactions (board games) and mass with United Labels AG (apparel and accessories) and Rubie's Costumes (costumes and masks). There will also be a yet-to-be-announced DTR deal for the US market.

Stables says that because of the IP's popularity in emerging markets (the books are used to teach English in India, for example) and its adaptability in numerous categories, the challenge of creating the program has been its wide scope.

"We have a pretty broad spectrum," she says. "The thing about this property is that it lends itself to everything. The movie style guide has really attracted people interested in both the girl and boy markets and collectible products as well."

While the licensing roster is filling up, Stables will be at Licensing Show looking to fill out certain categories, although she was hesitant to say which ones.

"There is probably always another deal to secure," she says. "But we have been successful yet judicious with our licensing program." —Gary Rusak

Top Toys

Germany (April)

1

Beyblade Metalfusion Kreisel
(Hasbro)

2

Beyblade Super Vortex Battle
(Hasbro)

2



3

Star Wars 2011 LPP
(Lego)

4

Beyblade Battle Top FaceOff
(Hasbro)



5

Ninjago Spinner Wave
(Lego)



Source: NPD EuroToys EPoS panel, Germany

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Smart retail

Marbles: The Brain Store expands its kids and family reach through limiting inventory and sharpening category focus

Built upon the concept of neuroplasticity—the idea that the brain can grow and change well into adulthood—Marbles: The Brain Store's first retail location opened its doors in Chicago, Illinois in 2008. "Our idea was to create a store around the idea of brain fitness," says CEO Lindsay Gaskins. "We wanted to offer products that were stimulating and exciting."

While opening an independent retail outlet in the depths of an economic recession is wrought with challenges, Gaskins says the focused and specialized product offerings, along with an exceptional consideration of the in-store experience, helped establish the concept.

And the first thing a customer will notice in one of Marbles' locations is that the 1,000-square-foot space contains a relatively small selection of products. "We carry 250 SKUs," says Gaskins. "Other stores that size probably have 2,000 or 3,000." Additionally, the products are all open and accessible for hands-on demonstrations by either the customer or the staff (a.k.a. Brain Coaches).

The products themselves are grouped in categories that reflect areas of brain improvement, such as critical thinking, word skills, memory and visual perceptions. And three times a year, the stock is injected with between 30 and 40 new and different SKUs to refresh the consistent 250 count. The products range in price anywhere between US\$5 and US\$500. And to build inventory, store representatives hit the Toy Fair circuit and are always open to solicitations from inventors and distributors.

The retailer's sleek display areas showcase games,

puzzles, accessories, software and toys. It's top-selling item last year was Buckyballs, a desk toy comprised of 216 different magnets that can be re-arranged into myriad combinations. As well, the two-player mathematic board game Quarto has been a hot item.

"We are very particular about what comes into the store," says Gaskins. "We have a committee where we use a variety of folks including neurologists, psychologists and teachers who write reports about the benefits of each product." Gaskin has also forged a relationship with the University of Chicago to help evaluate potential products.

While the store appeals to kids as well as adults, Gaskin says they do not carry any licensed goods and have no plans to do so. "For us it's about the game-play," she says. "We don't really need to have characters in order to appeal to kids. We come at it from a different angle."

The unique approach is working. Currently, there are eight outlets throughout Illinois and Minnesota, and plans are to open 10 more East Coast locations by the end of the year. Plus a robust website offers all the products found in-store, accounting for roughly 10% of the company's sales, a number that Gaskin expects will grow in the coming years.

In terms of promotion, word of mouth has been Marbles' best marketing strategy. The company also uses brain teasers and riddles in its marketing material, usually advertising on public transport, online and via radio. For example, the latest print ad in *Southwest Magazine* asks readers to count the number of perfect squares in a collection of 20 dots and then visit a Marbles location to get the answer. —Gary Rusak

BookBet You're Finally Here!



An impatient bunny is the driving force behind author and illustrator Mélanie Watt's newest picture book, *You're Finally Here!*, published by Disney US imprint Hyperion in February.

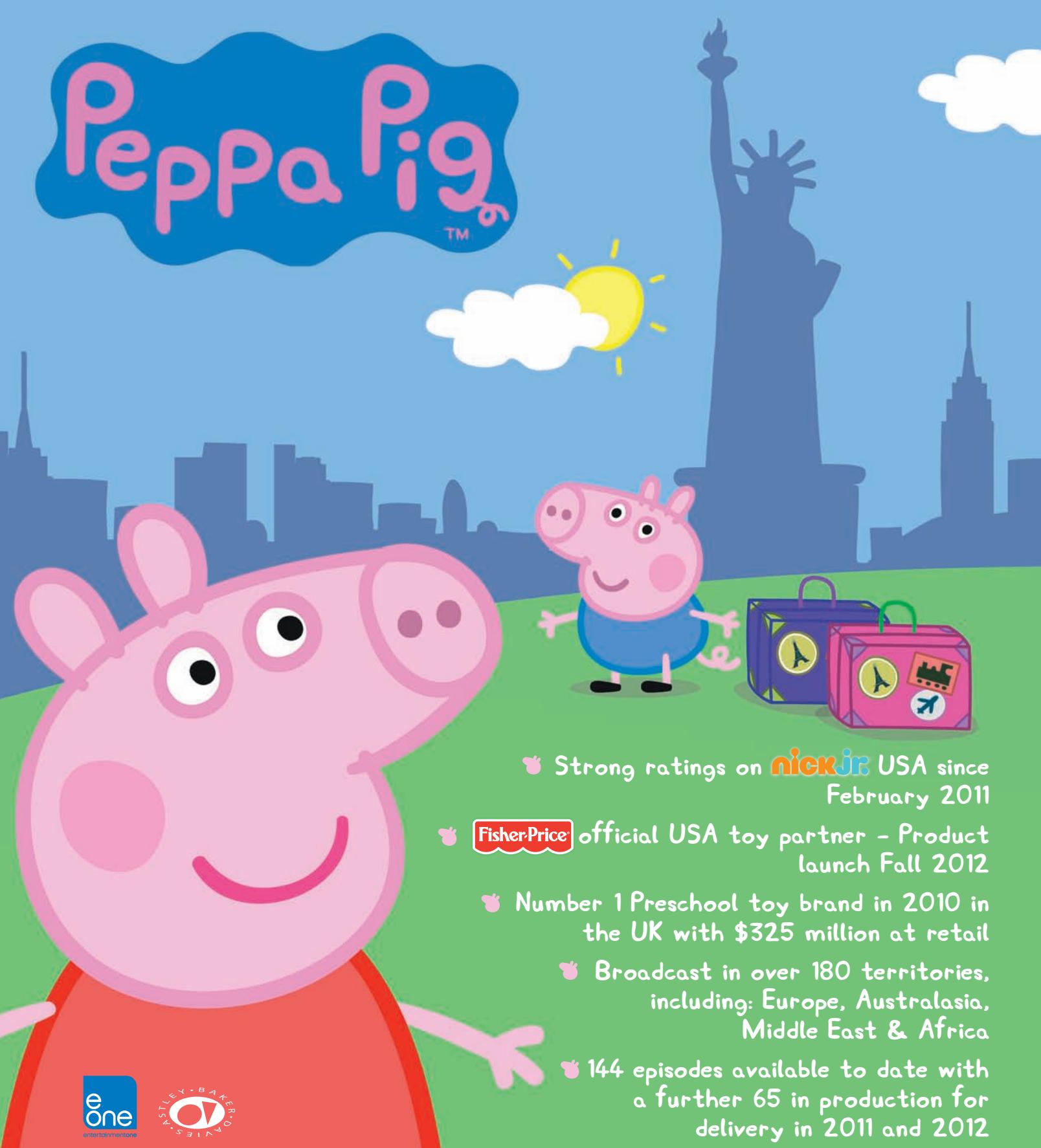
While punctuality seems to be the bunny's *raison d'être*, the other niceties of social etiquette are a bit beyond his grasp.

The quirky tale directly engages the reader with a snappy style that is sure to keep those pages a-turning. Watt is renowned for her work in this vein, having published several picture books, including *Augustine*, *Leon the Chameleon* and *Have I Got a Book For You!*

But the Canadian author, who currently lives near Montreal, is best known for creating *Scaredy Squirrel*, the star of four books and a 52 x 11-minute animated series produced by Nelvana. The boy-skewing comedy for six to nines debuted in Canada on YTV in April. Since then, the 2D toon has been picked up by Disney XD for broadcast in the US. Could the bouncing bunny be next?

—Gary Rusak

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The Orb Factory gets stuck on Fancy Nancy as first license

Who Marking 20 years of experience in the specialty market, Halifax, Canada-based designer and manufacturer The Orb Factory has a slate of popular craft brands including Curiosity Kit, Sticky Mosaic and Magnetic Mosaic. The adhesive-based craft kits have been a staple in the specialty retail tier in North America for years.

What "The essence of our product is that it's easy to use and is mess-free," says Bill Bordegon, sales and marketing manager for North America. "It's a craft product that has that paint-by-numbers concept, but with stickers. Kids can build jewelry or a jewelry box or a piece of artwork."

Bordegon says what drives sales is the sense of accomplishment children derive from successfully creating something. Although the craft category is one of the toughest to innovate, he feels that the simple-to-use/DIY aspect of The Orb Factory's product line is what appeals to consumers and retailers. "We have brought innovation to crafts," he says. "The category seems to rejuvenate itself every few years and I think that is why Sticky Mosaic has taken off."

Latest innovation Earlier this year, The Orb Factory entered the licensing market for the first time and picked

up the rights to produce Fancy Nancy craft products. The publishing IP that features a curious girl with a zest for life was a perfect fit for the company's initial foray into the field. "It's an evergreen license that is big in specialty," says Bordegon, adding that the books themselves mirror the craft activity. "Any [Fancy Nancy] book I open has five years worth of product development in just 10 pages," he says, explaining that the titular character is often adorned with bracelets, rings and other jewelry.

The branded line is due to hit North American retail shelves in July with prices ranging between US\$5 and US\$20. The Fancy Nancy products, unlike The Orb Factory's non-branded lines, will have a greater presence at mass-market retailers—Walmart and Target are already on-board for distribution.

What's next Heading into Licensing Show, The Orb Factory is in the market to pick up additional licenses. "We have decided that we want to go after a number of large evergreen licenses," Bordegon says. And like Fancy Nancy, the licenses have to match the craft activity inherent in the product line, while appealing predominately to girls, the keenest of crafters.

Contact Bill Bordegon, sales and marketing manager for North America (1-800-741-0089)
—Gary Rusak

CBS investigates CSI licensing

With the overwhelming ratings success of *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*, it is only natural that licensor CBS Consumer Products is endeavoring to grow its revenue from products based on the forensic science franchise. And to do that, EVP Liz Kalodner is taking the concept further into the kids market.

"It's something we thought about a great deal initially," Kalodner says. "Although we followed the [kids] audience here, we have been very careful with the products...they don't have the same level of intensity and gore that the show has." (An average episode of *CSI* attracts about 13.5 million viewers, with no exact measure of how many kids watch the series.) Kalodner explains that the CP initiative takes the essence of the series—which uses new intelligence-gathering techniques to solve problems—into a different realm of products.

The initial kids brand extension took the form of an interactive museum exhibit that

now has a permanent home at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas. *CSI: The Experience* features three different crime scenes where attendees use tools such as finger-printing and toxicology tests to draw conclusions about the crime. There is also an international traveling exhibit that features the same themes. "It was very interactive and kid-friendly, and quite popular with school groups," says Kalodner. "It was a wonderful merge."

Realizing the potential in the *CSI* brand, CBS then sewed up a DTR deal with Toys 'R' Us for *CSI*-branded science kits, a program that is entering its third year in the US. "Toys 'R' Us was very interested in building up that section of the store," she says.

Other deals in the pipeline designed to appeal to a kids demo include a series of chapter books developed with publishing licensee Simon & Schuster.



The network is looking for more partners at Licensing Show to complement its three-year-old DTR toy deal with Toys 'R' Us

Kalodner says she will be on the lookout for more partners for the *CSI* franchise during Licensing Show in Las Vegas, particularly in the video game and apparel categories.

"We see it as a marriage of entertainment and education," she says. "The *CSI* series has really become the *CSI* brand. We are looking to explore different aspects of that." —Gary Rusak



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Surround sound

Music is a must-have in the daily lives of US tweens and teens—Nick finds out just how important having a personal soundtrack is to them

BY ERIN MILLER



nickelodeon

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Photo: SCA Svenska Cellulosa Aktiebolaget

In the last issue, our Kaleidoscope Music Study explored the importance of music among kids. For 10- and 11-year-olds, we began to see a connection with music on a more personal level and, as predicted, tweens and teens took their passion for music a step further. Music plays a significant role in their lives, and they tap into their tune libraries constantly throughout the day. Whether in the car, in their rooms or at a friend's house, tweens and teens are constantly exposed to music. Just how meaningful is music to American 12- to 17-year-olds? We're going to take a stab at finding out in the second part of our study.

Tweens and teens are able to articulate just how important music is to them. A full 80% of 12- to 17-year-old boys and girls surveyed say that music is a very important part of their life—a percentage that gradually increased as respondents got older. Music serves many purposes for this age group, including escapism, self-expression, aspiration and relaxation. According to one 12-year-old boy, "Music is my reset button." Teens, more so than tweens, demonstrated how they compartmentalize their music. For example, teens often spoke about listening to certain genres or artists to match their moods. Teen boys commonly cited rap or metal as their music of choice for

when they're working out, angry or need to get "pumped up." The same can be said for teen girls. "If I'm depressed over a guy, I put on sad songs. If I'm in a good mood, I listen to upbeat music to make me more happy," said one 15-year-old girl.

Music is a constant fixture in this age group's daily life, from the time they wake up to the time they fall asleep. Three-quarters said they listen to music "all the time," catching tunes on the way to and during school (whether it's allowed or not), after school (while hanging out or doing homework) and before they go to bed. In fact, listening to music is a common way for teens to "relax" before falling asleep.

For 12- to 17-year-olds, music is also a genuine form of self-expression, evidenced by the way they spoke about the importance of lyrics and singers they admire. Several mentioned going the extra mile to look up a song's words to either memorize it or understand its meaning. This is just one more way that they connect to songs/artists on an aspirational level. As mentioned in the last issue, kids admire artists such as Eminem and Taylor Swift for writing and singing (or rapping) about their personal experiences. This notion was not lost among the older set, as Eminem and Taylor Swift continue to pop up as favorite artists. According to one 16-year-old boy, "Eminem tells stories to us."

The majority of tweens and teens have their own music devices, with 90% reporting they own an iPod, cell phone or MP3 player via which they listen to music. Downloading music is clearly the norm with these respondents as CDs march towards obsolescence. Downloading music isn't typically a daily, or even weekly, activity at this point in their lives—they're more likely to download music a couple of times a month. When it comes to where they get their music, iTunes prevails. There was mention of some free downloading, an act more common amongst older boys. However, despite all the talk about rampant free downloading, it doesn't seem to occur much with this age group.

This concludes our report on the role of music in kids' and teens' lives. Next month, Kaleidoscope will report on mobile engagement across the kids and tween demos. **•**

For more information, contact Kaleidoscope@nick.com

(Source: Nick Kids and Family Research, March 2011; Touchstone Research, April 2011. Quantitative Sample Size: N = 620 kids and teens ages six to 17.)

In an effort to keep you in touch with our audience and give a voice to our consumers, the Brand and Consumer Insights Department at Nickelodeon Kids & Family has created Nickelodeon Kaleidoscope. Every month, Kaleidoscope will capture key areas of interest across the kid and family cultural landscape, provide an understanding of attitudes and behaviors, and report on trends and buzz.

Muse of the Month

From Camp Rock to Lil Wayne

In teen Marisol's life, media is more influential than her parents

Marisol is not her real name. Her face is obscured. But her story is very true and is mirrored in the lives of so many teens everywhere. It's the story of a girl whose parents' involvement ends at putting a roof over her head and food on the table. It's the story of a girl who gets her advice from the streets and her cultural cues from rap lyrics. It's a story about living without a safety net.

Marisol lives in a simple, two-bedroom house with her mom, dad, brother and abuela. Despite the close quarters, fun family together time is non-existent. Her parents are strict, severe homebodies, venturing out only for work (dad) and church (mom). Little conversation takes place between generations. So what's left to help Marisol navigate the rocky road of teen-hood? Peers—and media.

Take rap music, for example. Marisol is way into it right now. But she isn't drawn to the genre for its killer rhymes and sick beats. She readily admits that she's been listening to rap simply because the cool kids at school are into it. Welcome to ninth grade—last month, Camp Rock; this month, Lil Wayne.

When kids are exposed to Lil Wayne's hardcore themes and lyrics, parents can be helpful to bring a little real-world perspective and explain that acting gangsta is not always, well, nice. Or they can even just say to their kids, "See, if you work really hard, you can have a diamond-studded grill like that some day."

Modern media incessantly reports on over-involved helicopter parents, but has virtually ignored the vast number of



families at the other end of the spectrum, where emotionally absent parents let kids fend for themselves. We, as media creators, should remember the Marisos and the influence we can have on kids who fly solo. —Sarah Chumsky and the team at Insight Kids

Insight Kids Insight Kids is a research and strategic consulting company dedicated to the development of innovative, impactful and inspiring experiences for kids and families, where you live and around the world. To be further inspired find us at www.insightkids.com/www.insightkidsblog.com or email thegrownups@insightkids.com.

Cool or Not? The Japanese plaything edition

	Boys 8 to 11 (196)	Girls 8 to 11 (166)	Boys 12 to 15 (169)	Girls 12 to 15 (131)	Boys 8 to 11 (174)	Girls 8 to 11 (91)	Boys 12 to 15 (156)	Girls 12 to 15 (89)	
Fushigi ball	31.6%	38%	22.5%	21.4%	Totally way cool *	31%	27.5%	17.9%	11.2%
	14.8%	16%	11.2%	11.5%	Very cool *	10.9%	12.1%	7.1%	4.5%
	17.3%	18.7%	22.5%	22.1%	Kinda cool *	23.6%	14.3%	16%	15.7%
	13.8%	12%	18.9%	19.8%	Not cool *	9.8%	14.3%	19%	23.6%
	22.4%	15.1%	24.9%	25.2%	Totally un-cool *	24.7%	31.9%	39.7%	44.9%
	19.3%	31%	30.5%	46.7%	Don't know what it is	27.8%	62.1%	37.3%	63.7%

* Excludes "Don't know who it is" responses



Cool or Not? is part of KidSay's April/May 2011 Trend Tracker. These one-of-a-kind research reports are published 10 times a year and provide a quantitative and qualitative picture of kids' likes, dislikes and trends gathered through in-school surveys with US kids ages five to 15. Contact Bob Reynolds (913-390-8110 or bob@kidssay.com).

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"I have always felt it was important to do good in the course of doing business, especially in this industry that is focused on developing products for kids."

- Leigh Anne Brodsky, President, Nickelodeon Consumer Products and LIMA Hall of Fame Inductee





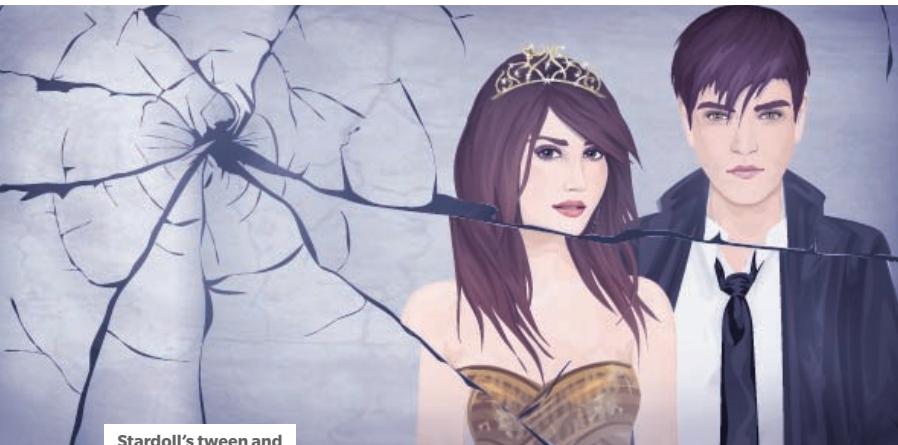
interactive

First kiss

BY WENDY GOLDMAN GETZLER

**A closer look at
how Random House
and Stardoll.com
hatched a hit online
and in print**

Those who have deemed the vampire trend to be over have overlooked one pertinent detail—the blood-sucking creatures are, by nature, immortal. Last fall, Random House's vampire-themed original online title, *Mortal Kiss*, was unleashed to virtual community Stardoll's 100 million users and gave new life to the way young girls engage with book content. The serialized novel, created by the publishing house's UK division and hosted on the Swedish girl-skewing website, was a multi-platform project built with elements of social networking and gaming. What started as an experiment in online publishing has led to solid hard-copy book sales, a second upcoming serialized novel and potential film and TV spin-offs. With their second *Mortal Kiss* title in the works, Fiona MacMillan, Random House Children's publisher for colour and licensing, and Stardoll GM Chris Seth open up about the incentive for the initial project, measuring success in the digital age, and what the next chapter holds for marketing content to youth.



Stardoll's tween and teen audience took a particular liking to the paranormal romance's leading lady, Faye

A new form of packaging

As major international media outlets, it comes as no surprise that Stardoll has dabbled in branded experiences and Random House has experimented with new forms of content delivery. *Mortal Kiss*, however, marked a first for both companies in terms of delivering a deeply social, serialized book experience.

"We wanted a way to tell an original story to an audience we already knew was there and engaged," says MacMillan. What Stardoll's tween and teen audience got was a novel delivered in daily chunks of 1,500 words to the website across eight weeks. The book was conceived and written in-house at Random House under the pen

in order to measure the success of the project and make changes accordingly. Branded activities that tapped into the core game-play elements of the site—such as Mortal Kiss dress-up games, short story contests, virtual fashion lines and daily polls—were strategically designed to allow for several points of engagement.

The number of page views on the campaign itself totaled 18 million over the eight-week period, and fan club membership topped 100,000. There were 700,000 entries in the Mortal Kiss doll dress-up game (which encouraged users to create avatar dolls of the book's main characters), and more than 3,000 online discussions around the book itself. While the metrics did exceed initial goals, what surprised both parties most was the number of girls devoted to translating the English text into other languages. Weekly summaries of the novel were translated into 10 languages, and users proceeded to further translate their own daily interpretations to help bridge language barriers for international readers. (Stardoll users primarily live in North America and Western Europe, but the social network has experienced recent growth in Brazil, Poland and the Middle East.)

"We covered all our bases," says Seth, down to creating a virtual Mortal Kiss fashion line based on key items from the book that were then made available for purchase. Real-world fashion lines inspired by the site's content are common to Stardoll, and it's a tactic that may be considered for the Mortal Kiss brand in the long run.

Dictating the future

In the near future, however, the focus is on a second serialized title, *Love Never Dies*, which will launch on Stardoll in mid-August. Aside from new characters, one main difference is that the novel will run over the course of four weeks, not eight. The partners decided to launch a more abridged version of the full novel in order to better capitalize on the planned hard-copy release.

"We thought it was more beneficial to shorten the length and extend content off the platform," says MacMillan. "You can build huge equity in the story and character loyalty, but we learned that you have to hold back some content so you have something to offer offline." While the published hard-copy of *Mortal Kiss* has sold roughly 10,000 English-language copies since launching at retail this past winter, it features exactly the same content that was delivered online via Stardoll.

But perhaps the biggest lesson learned from *Mortal Kiss* is that there is still a healthy appetite for the written word among digital-savvy tweens. "We knew our audience was interested in the right kind of literature, but it surprised us that the desire was there on a daily basis since Stardoll is more of a visual than text-based platform," says Seth. The market for a vampire-themed product that can straddle both online and offline engagement, and potentially lead to film and TV adaptations, also appears to be alive and well. 

"We wanted a way to tell an original story to an audience we already knew was there"

—Fiona MacMillan, Random House

name Alice Moss and then handed over as a manuscript to Stardoll's digital team, which enhanced the visual and graphic elements. The novel was packaged not unlike a soap opera in that it teased readers with steady character development and plot hooks.

"The initial engagement was through text and story, but then we saw girls going into competition and collaborating with each other," says MacMillan, adding that girls were blogging about—and voting on—plotlines and characters. In fact, user suggestions were listened to carefully and then used to tweak storylines and the eventual outcome of the novel.

Reading numbers

Fans' plot suggestions weren't the only things closely watched. Both companies kept in tune with daily metrics



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Kiip gets 'em while they're happy

What it is

Nineteen-year-old Brian Wong and his San Francisco-based team at Kiip are turning heads with their real-world spin on in-game mobile rewards. Kiip software banks on emotional advertising that ties tangible, branded prizes, such as a restaurant coupon or a free lip gloss, to virtual achievements within mobile games. The software, available on Apple and Android platforms, is currently offered on 15 mobile game titles and has already attracted US\$4 million in Series A funding.

How it works

By adopting the software, game developers allow Kiip to track when certain milestones—like a level completion—are hit. These achievements trigger the appearance of redeemable rewards from companies such as Popchips, Vitaminwater and Dr Pepper. The advertising model is designed to play off of the positive moments experienced while gamers are playing.

What it means

Kiip has plans to go after a young mobile-focused market with several kid-oriented brands, and collaborations with platforms like Facebook are also on the company's radar. The non-traditional nature of the software opens the door for creative, hyper-targeted advertising opportunities and could be a literal game-changer for the future of rewards.

—Wendy Goldman Getzler



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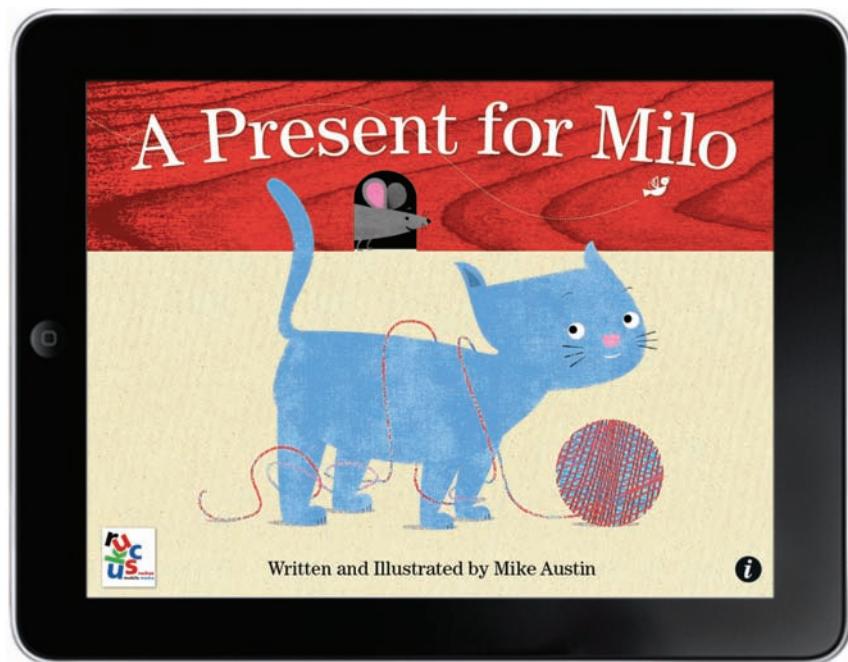
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Noise maker

Ruckus looks to shake up the kids app market

Screen time The transition from traditional publishing to mobile storytelling hasn't been a quiet one, and year-old startup Ruckus Media Group, led by former Simon & Schuster and HarperCollins execs Rick Richter and Jim Young, is fueling the evolution with a series of innovative story apps for the iPad, iPhone, Android and other media platforms.

"With the ubiquity of devices like the iPhone and iPad, we saw an opportunity to create new media," says Richter, CEO of Wilton, Connecticut-based Ruckus. What's particularly new about the company's approach to media is that it's shaking up the order in which stories migrate from one platform to another. For example, original Ruckus app *A Present for Milo* already has a

three-book print deal. "Usually digital rights trail print rights, but with us, our print rights will trail digital origination," says Richter.

Ruckus collaborates with bestselling authors like David A. Carter (*Bugs That Go!*) and Kevin Lewis (*The Kid Moves On*), as well as illustrators, animators, celebrity performers and musicians to create a final high-definition product that mixes animation, digital storytelling and gaming. The company's first app shipped last September in advance of a Series A funding round that generated US\$3.5 million in February.

Behind the scenes A portion of Ruckus's recent funding has been used to staff up the company with industry peers—the most recent hire being former Scholastic publishing exec Lynn Smith, who joined the 18-person outfit as director of business development. She's working on sussing out in-bound licensing opportunities, such as the deal sealed in April with Hasbro to develop apps based on the Tonka Chuck and Friends, My Little Pony and Transformers Prime brands. Chief content officer Jason Root, who hails from Nickelodeon, and marketing director Jeff Zakim, formerly of EMI Music, also became part of the Ruckus team earlier this year.

The next level While based in the US, Ruckus distributes apps globally to more than 90 stores. The company is eyeing the international mobile market and relying on localized content partnerships—particularly in Europe, China and India—to serve as segues into foreign territories. And as an in-bound and out-bound licensing company, Ruckus is interested in securing more high-profile licenses like the one with Hasbro. While aiming high, Richter is still cautious about having unrealistic sales expectations. "The average app sells 100,000 downloads. The bottom 90% sell 11,000 downloads on average and lose money. So a full 90% of apps created technically lose money," he says. "But when you have a hit, it's a beautiful thing. And you don't win if you don't play." —Wendy Goldman Getzler

The Digits

Numbers that speak volumes about kids and technology

There are roughly
7.5 million
kids under the age of 13 with active
Facebook accounts. More than
five million in this group are
10 years old
or younger
(Consumer Reports)



Almost
a third
of apps on parents'
smartphones were
downloaded by
their kids...
(Nielsen)

...And it's no
wonder—the
portion of parents
handing over their
iPads to their kids
has now reached
70%
(PBS)



It's still early
days, but the original
Nintendo DS continues to
outsell its more advanced
3D version by a rate of
32.5%
(The NDP Group)

Playing with



Mike the Knight's medieval theme puts a new twist on a traditional play type



BY GARY RUSAK

character?

What came first, the property or the play pattern? The answer may be a moot point—you can't have one without the other when it comes to kids consumer products.

No

longer considered a frivolous activity that occupies youngsters before the more serious problems of adulthood beset them, play is now deemed an essential part of growing up. In fact, the move to recognize play as something much more important than simple amusement has led to the enshrinement of the “right to play and relax” in UNICEF’s Conventions on Rights of the Child, right alongside vital necessities like access to clean water and physical security.

“If you look at where play behavior resides in the brain, it’s in the very deepest part of the brain stem,” says Dr. Stuart Brown, author and founder of the National Institute for Play in Carmel Valley, California. “The force that begins to be stimulated during play is located in the early ancient brain stem centers.” Similarly, Insight Kids/Insight Research Group’s Stacey Matthias asserts that the types of play in which kids participate all have a “developmental job” to do. “Emotionally, cognitively and physically, kids are playing and they are doing exactly what they need to do to help them grow up,” says the founder and co-CEO of the New York-based research and strategic consulting company with a client list that includes Nickelodeon and PBS Kids.

While Dr. Brown says that the understanding of the evolutionary purpose behind play is “reaching the evolutionary understanding of where sleep and dreams were 15 years ago,” he stresses that there is a disconnect between the science of play and the very companies

whose business it is to develop playthings based on established characters and intellectual properties.

"They are not [aware of the current research]," argues Stuart, who has worked as a consultant to different toycos, including Mattel, in the past. "Some of the products are clever and have market niches, but they really don't touch upon the real essence of play behavior."

However, when tasked with creating an IP or even making a toy line based on an existing one, most executives would say they often consult the research to discover more about the play patterns, or play types, that kids are exploring. In doing so, they often layer archetypal narra-

Jacqueline Harding, director of UK-based media consultancy Tomorrow's Child, has built her career in child development around deciphering and delineating play. She often cites 16 recognized and well-established universal play patterns/types. "A true understanding of how play patterns work can really inform the work of IP owners and help them target and match children's established and researched routines of play," she says. A quick glance at the list (See our sidebar, "Play patterns defined" on page 58), and it's not hard to associate some very successful properties with their complementary play patterns.

"For parents, it's becoming increasingly important to know what their children are doing, what kind of play they are engaging in, and what benefits are associated with it," says Harding. She points out that toycos such as Mattel and V-Tech are classifying their products online according to play patterns, adding that an understanding of play patterns is growing amongst the toycos and consumers themselves. "It's those companies that really know the strength of their products and can really exploit it in a positive way around a specific play pattern that find success," she says.

Case in point is Spin Master Toys. The Toronto, Canada-based manufacturer has grown into one of the major players in the industry by zeroing in on specific play patterns throughout their product offerings.

"We strive to realize the value of play," says Mark Sullivan, EVP of marketing at Spin Master. "There seem to be some innate play patterns, and by tapping into them we have our greatest successes." For example, there's the recent launch of boys property Redakai. Taking a multi-pronged approach, Spin Master is exploring the gaming aspect of the IP for the older portion of its boys six to 12 target, while concentrating on Redakai's role-play appeal to engage the younger end of the group.

Redakai's trading card game likely falls under the category of mastery play, where participants try to control their environment and are tasked with employing pre-existing rules to win the game. The role-play element, no less important to the IP, gives younger consumers a chance to indulge in imaginative play and take part in the overarching narrative, participating in the main character's quest and battling against a variety of enemies.

These two core patterns are being developed to underpin the success and expansion of the franchise. As well, there is a collectibility aspect that appeals to the older demo.

"It's really not just one play pattern," says Sullivan. "We wanted to bring more to the table."

While a mature program will most likely cover a number of different play patterns/types throughout its myriad extensions, there is usually a core pattern that is inexorably tied to its success, like Bob the Builder, for example. Clearly the HIT Entertainment property hones in on "building" and role-play. Something like Marvel Entertainment's cast of characters, meanwhile, is created upon an archetypal foundation that pits good against evil. What would Spider-Man be, after all, without a host of villains to defeat? But, underneath



Sesame Workshop's CP success stems from the creation of relatable characters that can be explored through a multitude of traditional play types

tives (a.k.a. familiar storylines) on top of specific stories and characters to help their audience more easily access the play type.

"Things like Disney Princess or Cars, stories revolving around good vs. evil—those archetypal narratives are really props for a play pattern rather than a play pattern itself," says Matthias. "Kids need the characters, but it's really all about providing a spark for their imagination."

So when developing an IP and its attendant consumer products and licensing program, it might be helpful to take a look at what defines play patterns or play types, how some popular IPs tap into one or more of them, and finally what play types are ripe for exploring in the current marketplace. Along the way, we'll also get a glimpse at some emerging archetypal narratives being employed, and examine the tightrope creators and brand executives must walk to make a successful toy line.

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Play patterns defined

Researchers and child development experts across the globe have organized play into 16 different categories, each defined by the value of the activity and its role in childhood development. Take a look:

Symbolic play allows gradual exploration and leads to increased understanding without the risk of being out of one's depth.



Rough and tumble play includes close-encounter play, which gauges relative strength and centers on discovering physical flexibility and the exhilaration of display.

Socio-dramatic play involves the performance of real and potential experiences of an intense personal, social, domestic or interpersonal nature.



Social play is defined by play during which rules and criteria for social engagement and interaction are revealed and explored.



Creative play allows for a new response, the transformation of information, and awareness of new connections, with the added element of surprise.

Communication play: Using words, nuances or gestures such as mime, jokes, play-acting, singing and debating.



Dramatic play includes dramatizing events in which the child is not a direct participant.



Exploratory play accesses factual information consisting of manipulative behaviors, such as handling, throwing, banging or mouthing objects.

Deep play allows the child to encounter risky or even potentially life-threatening experiences to develop survival skills and conquer fear.



Fantasy play revolves around activity that rearranges the world according to the child in a way unlikely to reflect reality.

Imaginative play occurs when the conventional rules, which govern the physical world, do not apply.



Locomotor play simply involves movement in any or every direction for its own sake, with no other goal.



Objective play is an activity that uses infinite and interesting sequences of hand-eye manipulations and movements.

Mastery play puts children in control of the physical and affective ingredients of their environment.

Recapitulative play allows the child to explore ancestry, history, rituals, stories, rhymes, fire and darkness, and enables children to access the play of early human evolution.



Role play explores ways of being, although not normally of an intense personal, social, domestic or interpersonal nature.

Source: A Playworker's Taxonomy of Play Types (2002) by Bob Hughes

their establishing narrative, most of the Marvel characters tap into kids' desires to role-play, and then craft related toys and consumer products.

"It's become synonymous really with Marvel," says Paul Gitter, president of consumer products for North America. "Kids will say 'I'll be Spider-Man, you can be Destroyer' or 'I'll be the Hulk,'" he says.

The importance of role-play is something Marvel is well aware of as it looks to other licensees to extend its various properties. "We try and take the most aspirational characteristics of the particular property and drive them home through the initial launch," Gitter says, pointing to the multi-billion-dollar Iron Man program as a good example of the strategy at work.

"With that property, we knew we would concentrate on flying, and particularly the aspirational element of it. After we developed action figures and other toys around that idea, we moved out towards other product categories a bit further away from that core idea, like games and novelty. For us, it really does start with that core play pattern."

Another iconic and successful IP that keeps a laser-beam focus on play patterns is Sesame Street. Foremost to the brand's appeal is its cast of Muppet characters representing a large spectrum of familiar, relatable personality types that appeal to Sesame's preschool target.

"What's unique about our brand is we have created a community that is unlike any other children's brand," says Rosemarie Truglio, VP of education and research for Sesame Workshop, the New York-based nonprofit behind the 41-year-old IP. "It's populated with lots of personalities and children can see themselves in them."

While the narrative and characters tend to capture the hearts and minds of Sesame's audience, the Workshop keeps tabs on where play patterns are headed to bridge the gap into the world of consumer products. For instance, the initial rollout of a new Sesame Street program often begins with plush and taps into what can be described as socio-dramatic play, where kids enact real, personal or domestic experiences. "Plush plays a significant role for us," says Truglio. "The character becomes a friend, and the child can travel and play with their friend in a social-emotional way."

Of course, after the initial connection with the character has been fostered by plush, additional extensions are readily accepted. Sesame Workshop has licensed a number of different products that can arguably fit into most of the 16 established play types. However, Sesame's key to success—beyond establishing such relatable characters—is that it makes the connection between the product and the play pattern it embodies explicit. It's an approach that is applauded by Harding from Tomorrow's Child.

"I think IP owners should articulate this very clearly to parents," Harding contends. "They should be discussing the advantages and the benefits of a particular play pattern. They should find the real strength of their IP, stick to it, and talk to parents directly about it."

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Character comes first or so says every company in the process of developing a new IP, where creating a relatable central character to drive the content becomes the primary goal. "Do we script it to end up with a product or play pattern?" asks Sharon Lisman, VP of creative and product development at Scholastic Media. "It just doesn't work that way at all. I look at a play pattern, but I don't invent a brand because of it."

Melissa Segal, SVP of global consumer products at The Jim Henson Company, agrees. "We are attracted to ideas and characters that are unique and fresh," she says. "We don't take a prescribed approach [and primarily consider] whether the IP will lend itself directly to a merchandise program."

That said, there is no denying that when a media company invests in a concept, one of the most significant ways of recouping its investment (or even getting a TV series off the ground in the first place) is to land merch deals—particularly a master toy partner if we're talking about preschool properties. HIT Entertainment is currently in production on *Mike the Knight*, a CGI series co-production with Nelvana that will bow in the US and Europe in the latter half of the year.

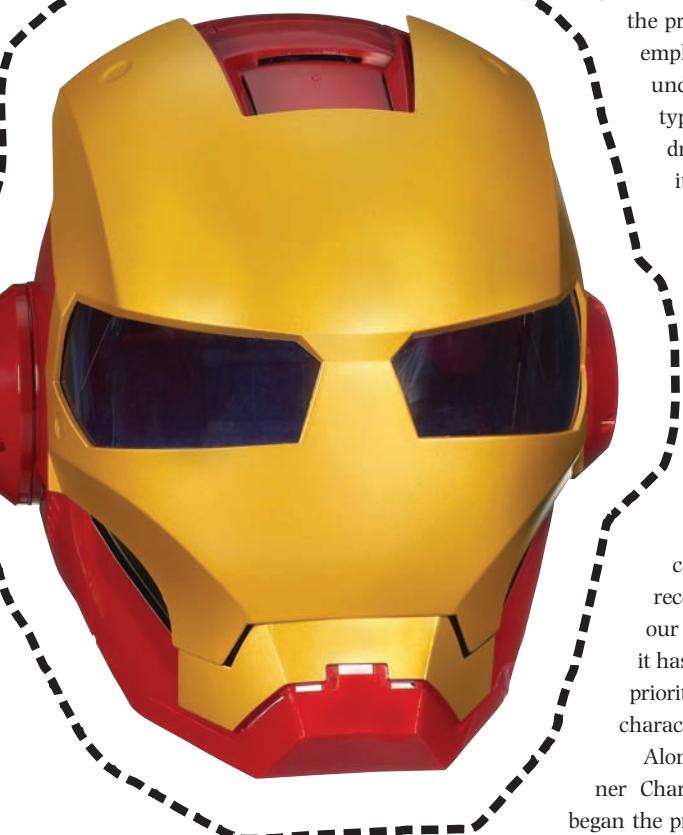
What's driving buzz around the property, however, is Mike's employment of an arguably under-used historical archetype—medieval knights, dragons and battles—and its related potential to spawn a new iconic IP.

Jon Owen, SVP of HIT Brands, says he was first attracted to the idea because it brought a relatable and funny main character back to preschool TV, which he contends has been populated by more conceptual and abstract fare in recent years. "The narrative is our starting point, and I think it has to be," he says. "Our first priority was to bring the hero character back to preschool."

Along with UK master toy partner Character Options, HIT then began the process of developing a toy line with a decided emphasis on role play.

"It will be led by figurines and playsets," says Owen. "However, the series has to stand on its own, and we think it does. The danger exists that the extensions will seem too contrived. And we know that our core business is to produce a TV program, but throughout that production, we are considering what play pattern we want to hit on with the extensions."

Role play is the predominant play type fueling the bulk of Marvel's brand extensions



A survey of development experts, IP owners and toycos yields one area of absolute agreement—they all contend that the key to developing a successful toy line is striking the perfect balance between dictating the play pattern and letting children explore and develop their own ways of interacting with it.

"It really is about providing the right amount of spark to get them going," says Matthias. "If it's really prescribed, there is not enough room for them to play their own way. But if there aren't enough contours in the narrative, then they won't know where to begin."

Furthermore, Harding agrees that as a result of the heavy emphasis on character-driven IP, play is becoming too prescribed and perhaps even limiting. "It's getting far too structured," she says. "The spontaneous nature of play should be an integral part of childhood. It's hard for parents to be hands-off, but it's important that there is a spontaneous angle to almost all play."

Spin Master's Sullivan says he takes the idea that creativity is the engine of play into account and he respects the need for children to bring new elements to the overarching play pattern of a product.

For example, in the development of Dr. Dreadful—a brand targeted at boys that features gross-out experiments and fits into the category of creative play—Spin Master has added more DIY features over time.

"We try to look at the classic play pattern but make it even more engaging," he says, explaining that the line has evolved to allow more creativity (which in this case means providing different combinations and ways of serving up bodily fluids and exploding appendages). "If you just make it 'paint by numbers' and try to do the same thing over and over, it's just not as engaging," he adds.

And while some of the play patterns have been mined and continue to be exploited with the full force of product offerings, there are some opportunities that have largely been ignored by major toycos and IP owners. Of course, some patterns are easier to tap into than others, but Harding says people in the business could learn from the current research and perhaps capitalize on it.

One category that is under-developed is deep play, defined as any activity that allows the child to encounter risky and even potentially life-threatening situations to create survival skills and conquer fear. There are some obvious reasons why deep play might be avoided by IP owners and toycos, but Harding says the emphasis need not lie in its perilous elements, but rather in creative ways of working with that idea.

"I also think there is an opportunity with social play," Harding says. "Etiquette itself has sort of been lost and we would benefit from play that shows us how to get along with each other better. And if we do have a falling out, how to make amends."

Harding says while it is hard for her to pin down exactly what toy product could be developed around these principles, an understanding of the general framework and the innate pattern could be helpful in such a pursuit. ☀

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pop

BY DAWN WILENSKY

While the concept of risk-aversion continues to drive decision-making at most retailers, this crop of properties heading to Vegas is aiming to prove that you can't keep a good license down

Henson's HIP keeps an eye on tweens

HIP, the third-party licensing banner within The Jim Henson Company, is eyeing tweens, teens and young adults with Psyclops. The social expression brand features one-eyed characters that embrace the world of music, art, dance and technology. Psyclops was introduced in 2009 as a mobile application that allows consumers to create animations and music videos synced to their iPods. HIP is now looking at plush, apparel, home furnishings, publishing and electronics categories to expand the brand. The L.A.-based company will also develop Psyclops platform video games on an exclusive basis and mobile phone covers non-exclusively. The Jim Henson Company, meanwhile, has preschool property Pajanimals ready to roll into consumer products as the half-hour series featuring friendly puppets is prepped for its debut on US net Sprout. The Henson original grew from musical interstitials that focus on four characters as they venture out on amazing journeys of discovery, only to return to a calm bedtime each evening. Products that mirror the concepts of the show, including toys, publishing, sleepwear, slippers, bedding, bath and personal care items, will reach US consumers by Q3 2012. New DVD titles, music and digital applications are also in development.

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Kids a priority for Endemol's new CP arm

Getting the word out about its trio of exciting properties is foremost in the mind of Olivier Gers, CEO of Endemol Worldwide Brands. The new division of the Euro production powerhouse plans to provide the company with a more coordinated approach to licensing, digital extensions, music publishing and branding. This first-time exhibitor is showcasing a new version of the 1990s preschool hit *Bananas in Pyjamas*, which launched in mid-May on ABC2 in Australia and rolls out to CiTV in the UK and Cartoonito's Euro feeds later this year. And along with UK-based Platinum Films, Endemol is debuting tween boy series *Matt Hatter Chronicles*. Airing this fall, the CGI series has been presold to Nickelodeon UK, GMTV, Nickelodeon Australia, Teletoon Canada and RTE Ireland. With Topps Europe (trading cards) and Penguin Books (outside of North America) already on-board as licensees, Gers is looking to build out the program. Completing the trifecta is R.L. Stine's *The Haunting Hour*, co-produced with L.A.'s The Hatchery and airing on The Hub in the US. The horror-fantasy series, targeted at tweens, will soon be rolling out internationally, and partners are being sought for all consumer product categories.

Wild Kratts lead animal invasion

Wild Kratts stars Chris and Martin Kratt have a following in their own right, explains Natalie Osborne, EVP of business development at 9 Story Entertainment, the Toronto, Canada-based company behind the PBS Kids toon. It's the first time the adventuring zoologist siblings have been animated and they're on a mission to save the animals of this planet from the evil Zach Varmitech. Targeted at kids ages four to eight, the first wave of corresponding products, including toys, apparel, video games and room décor, will arrive on US retail shelves in September 2012. And not to be outdone by the Kratts are a group of free-spirited creatures that run a summer camp clad only in their underwear, also known as Almost Naked Animals. Heavily skewed toward boys ages six to 11, the products inspired by the TV series will have a soft retail launch at specialty and mid-tier channels in spring 2012 for publishing, apparel, video games and room décor. A wider push is being planned by 9 Story and North American agent The Licensing Shop (also based in Toronto) for back-to-school 2012. Currently the 40 x 22-minute series airs on YTV (Canada), Cartoon Network US and CiTV (UK).



Disney sets sights on growing its preschool biz

Disney Consumer Products is making a major push to expand its preschool footprint with the launch of Disney Junior, the House of Mouse's first 24-hour US cable channel for preschoolers. Merchandise programs across all consumer product categories are planned to dovetail with the initiative. And under-five fave Winnie the Pooh will get an extra boost with a spot on the new network and a feature film rolling out in July. On the boys front, *Cars 2* will no doubt continue to drive business with a new Cars Land attraction due to launch at Disneyland in summer 2012.

Mobile app hit feasts on new deals

Reaching *Angry Birds* status is iPhone/iPad app *Cut the Rope*. The kid-friendly game from ZeptoLab that's sold seven million copies since last October is following the *Birds'* flight path and heading offline with a fall 2011 licensing and merchandising program crafted by New York-based agency The Wildflower Group. The playful game challenges players to feed the ever-hungry monster Om Nom by cutting the rope that holds his desired candy at precisely the right time so that it drops into his mouth. Discussions are underway with potential licensees for toys, back-to-school, sleepwear, publishing, food and candy, and accessories. Already on-board is Commonwealth Toy & Novelty with soft/plush toys and accessories, PVC toys and accessories, activity sets, room décor and balls. In addition, apparel licensee Changes is currently creating t-shirts, sweatshirts, fashion tops, and track jackets for kids, teens, young adults and adults.

and has been sold to Disney (India, Latin America and Italy), Luk International (Spain and Portugal) and Z@pp/Zepplin (The Netherlands).

Walmart tests Veggie video booths

Walmart has taken the lead with select stores on testing VeggieTales GigglePOD interactive video booths from Primary Leisure Global. The kid-centric kiosks will be placed predominantly in shopping malls, typically near the food courts and play areas. Big Idea Entertainment, the faith-based arm of Classic Media, is also planning to expand the program into tabletop cardboard playsets, removable wall art, karaoke CDs

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and children's furniture. Open categories include food & beverage, electronic games and apparel.

TLC Baby, Discovery Kids under Big Tent

Along with introducing UK-based adult-skewing stationery property Purple Ronnie to the US market at the show, New York's Big Tent Entertainment is banking on the relaunch of Discoverykids.com and new gaming initiatives, including its first online community and game, to further boost the established and already successful Discovery Kids licensing

the infant brand targeting parents is looking for development, health & safety, layette and apparel licensees. TLC Baby is also aligning with new licensee Spuds Inc. and has plans to create a collection of organic baby essentials.

Latin grooves power BondiBand

New animated series *BondiBand* from BondiBand LLC is first out of the gate for a trio that includes co-producers EXIM Licensing Group and Leda Films. The series targeted at kids six to 11, centers around six kids who front as a rock band while they look for a powerful energy source in the universe and fight off the evil efforts of Miss C. Lebrity. With a broadcast sale to Disney XD in Latin America, Brazil and Mexico, the Rome, Italy-based company is currently working with a toy producer in China to develop its own line of action figures and card games. "We hope to find a master toy licensee, but if we don't, we will partner with toy producers specific to each country," says Eric Beloso, director for EMEA and Asia.

Friendship anchors Gaspard and Lisa

A beautiful Parisian backdrop is the setting for Chorion's *Gaspard and Lisa*, which celebrates the joy of friendship between two six-year-old besties. The consumer products program is focused initially on landing toys, games, home entertainment, gifts and collectibles licensees to produce goods for girls ages two to five. The first wave of product should be available at France's specialty retailers in spring 2012. The US launch will follow for 2013/2014, as the preschool series finds traction with Disney Junior audiences in 2012. Other categories of interest include promotions, apparel and stationery.



Voltron's new force

As worldwide rep for '80s cult favorite Voltron, Classic Media has used the 12 months since taking on the property to develop a two-pronged strategy that will complement both the classic and new series, explains Nicole Blake, EVP of global marketing and consumer products at the New York-based firm. First up are products based on the original *Voltron* from master toy licensee Mattel, interactive partner THQ, Dynamic Forces (publishing), Bentex (apparel) and costumes (Rubie's). The new *Voltron Force* is set to debut on NickToons this month with merchandise slated for back-to-school 2012. "We are looking for accessories, home décor and footwear partners to execute a program against the classic and new series," adds Blake. Showgoers will also get a sneak-peek at *About Life with Boys*. Classic has publishing, stationery and toys under development for the new live-action tween series set to premiere in Canada on YTV this September, with presales to Canal J (France), Nickelodeon UK and ABC Australia. (A US home has yet to be announced.)

program. CMO Rich Maryyanek says the company's looking to expand the science and learning brand for kids ages six to nine into video games, electronics, apparel, home décor, outdoor sports, food and promotions. Also in the company's broad portfolio is US network TLC and its new offshoot TLC Baby. Based on the popularity of the net's parenting shows,

Cookie Jar stuffed with evergreens

A reigned licensing program for Cookie Jar/CPLG's Richard Scarry's Busytown is set to land on US retail shelves this fall with new goods from master toy partner The Bridge Direct. Fans will also be able to enjoy a live stage show being produced by Koba Entertainment this fall, as well as learn about child passenger safety via a renewed year-long partnership with the American Automobile Association.

Other priorities for CPLG include building a comprehensive statement around Cartoon Network standout *Johnny Test* with a DS game (505 Games), comic book and graphic novel (Viper Comics), and print-on-demand apparel and accessories, room décor, party supplies and holiday items (TysToyBox.com).

Peppa woos US preschoolers, lands Fisher-Price

A model of steady, managed growth akin to that in the UK is being utilized to ensure longevity in the US for Peppa Pig, says Andrew Carley, head of licensing at Toronto/London-based producer and distributor Entertainment One (eOne). The preschool series is on its way, having found a permanent pen on Nick Jr. US. The word is that the series will likely be stripped daily due to the strong ratings it has experienced since launching on the channel in February, and Fisher-Price has signed on as master toy licensee. It's now up to new hire and North

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American VP of licensing and merchandise Jennifer Bennett to round up additional partners at the show. The first State-side products should start rolling out at retail towards the end of 2012.

Boys property to make Dino-mite debut

There's no doubt that new boys property Dino Froz will benefit from the creative minds at Italian toyco Giochi Presziosi that have successfully built the Gormiti boys action brand. Following the Italian toy craze to market is 26 x 13-minute toon *Dino Froz*, being co-produced with Italian studio MondoTV. Specific details regarding the licensing program will be revealed at the show. And switching channels to Gormiti, the toy property has spawned a third TV series, *Gormiti: The Neorganic Evolution*, that's set to launch this fall with new heroes, villians and storylines.

Battleship heads into the licensing fray

Toy giant Hasbro is extending another of its iconic brands into the entertainment space, partnering with Universal Studios on *Battleship*, a live-action feature film due to hit theaters around the globe next summer. An extensive licensing program aimed at young boys, teen boys/girls and dads is planned for spring 2012. Hasbro is currently sorting out partners for additional toys and games, apparel, publishing, digital gaming and pro-

motions. The Pawtucket, Rhode Island-based company will also take a unique multi-tiered fashion angle with its apparel program, drawing on inspiration from the brand's heritage right up to the theatrical release itself.

Mike gets ready to slay 'em

Excitement is building for *Mike the Knight*, an original CGI-animated series from HIT Entertainment and Nelvana. "Mike brings a modern take on the heroic knight and castle play pattern for a new generation of preschoolers," says Jon Owen, SVP at HIT Brands. The series will air this fall on CBeebies in the UK, preschool network Treehouse (Canada), ABC Australia, SVT (Sweden), TF1 (France), NRK (Norway) and DRTV (Denmark). Nelvana Enterprises is repping the series for broadcast and home entertainment sales in Latin America and France, as well as broadcast in the US, while UK-based HIT is overseeing Mike the Knight in all other territories and consumer products. More than 20 licensees, including Character Options (master toy, UK) and Simon & Schuster (global publishing), are already on-board to support the property.

A tent pole of heroic proportions

Avengers Assemble is the tent-pole initiative set to drive licensed product sales for Marvel Entertainment through 2012 and beyond. The multi-character movie event Marvel's *The Avengers* heads to big screens worldwide starting May 4, 2012 and stars Iron Man, Captain America, Thor, The Incredible Hulk, Black Widow and Hawkeye. Already lending support are master toy licensee Hasbro, Hallmark (social expressions), Franklin (sporting goods) and Maisto (die-cast toy vehicles). A fashion program designed around Black Widow is being targeted at girls, tweens, juniors and missy segments. Co-branding remains another key strategy for the company as it looks to supplement existing deals with Reebok, Stussy and the NBA with new partnerships.

Tween property a monster hit for Mattel

Fearsomely popular with tweens, Mattel's Monster High graduates to new heights with a broadened program featuring the first-ever editorial journal from Little Brown Publishing due out this fall. "We are expanding our consumer products offerings to include sporting goods with edgy skateboards from Bravo Sports, as well as bikes and folding scooters by Dynacraft," says Rosa Zeegers, SVP of worldwide consumer products licensing at Mattel Brands. The El Segundo, California-based company's main squeeze Barbie, meanwhile, heads into department stores and high-end specialty boutiques in the coming weeks with a collection of signature items from Noir Jewelry and designer Leeora Catalan, inncluding a Barbie Dream House ring.



Kids cooking show to shine

After cooking up a great retail program and strong viewership in Australia, TV series *Junior MasterChef* from London-based prodeco Shine heads to the UK boasting an exclusive deal for cooking kits this fall with WH Smith and an exclusive launch of Peter Black cooking gift sets at John Lewis in August. While a broadcaster hasn't been secured in the US, State-side licensee KidsLine will create products modeled on the IP for specialty and department stores this summer. Shine is now seeking licensees for toys, publishing, food, stationery, apparel, dress-up and home décor for kids in various territories. Promotional and marketing partnerships are also being sought across the board, including educational curriculum and cooking classes. Positioning for the products can range from mass to specialty, depending on the item and the territory.



New chapter opens for publishing staples

Scholastic Media's The Magic School Bus is taking its first trip into the world of consoles with the release of *The Magic School Bus: Oceans* for the Nintendo DS this fall. Broader exposure is also planned for stand-alone brands Scholastic (for school-age kids) and Little Scholastic (for kids up to three years old) with products from Kids Station Toys, Kidz Toyz, Danara and Green Hill, as well as new DVD releases. Plus, animated heroine WordGirl will resume her role as Ambassador for the New York-based company's Summer Challenge reading program, while branded comic books from Kaboom Studios, games and puzzles from Briarpatch and educational toys from Twisterz roll out at retail.

NASCAR revs up kids licensing push

Billed as the Canadian toyco's "biggest licensing program" to date, Spin Master is teaming up with NASCAR to attract younger fans with exciting, innovative and fun products. A new era is beginning as NASCAR changes the face of its sports merchandising program to broaden its retail and entertainment exposure, and Spin Master is going to play a major role in the transition. The deal's full throttle will be felt several years after the first products hit shelves in 2012. Authentic replicas of top driver cars, indoor/outdoor R/C cars and Ripp'n fast NASCAR pull-backs lead the line and will not only be sold at mass market, but also at hardware chains Home Depot and Lowe's, and Mobil and Napa gas stations across the US.

A2 builds its portfolio

In a recently sealed deal, L.A.-based A2 Entertainment is working closely with US specialty retailer Build-a-Bear Workshop to grow its entertainment and brand reach. According to co-president Amy Moynihan, the plan will get a boost from the rollout of the second iteration

of 2009 animated series *Holly & Hal* originally created in-house by BABW. The first new special, produced by A2, will air on The Hub in November and December. In the meantime, Moynihan's looking for Build-a-Bear plush, publishing, home video and arts & crafts partners to spearhead the new licensing program. Also on A2's slate is new toon *Martha & Friends*, starring the voice talents of the diva of domesticity herself, Martha Stewart. The series will air in the US on cablenet Hallmark Channel (also home to Stewart's daytime show) in late June and it features dozens of projects that kids can craft at home. Naturally, A2 is looking to fill complementary categories such as arts & crafts, cooking & food play, and furniture to build out a program for kids six to 10.

TJLG's portfolio Sprouts with opportunities

"We are particularly excited to be representing two Sprout properties," says Debra Joester, president and CEO of The Joester Loria Group, based in New York. Encouraging kids to get up and moving is Iceland's *LazyTown*, which will have a second go on US airwaves (Nick Jr. aired the series in the mid-2000s) this September via Sprout's reach into 50 million homes. To broaden consumer awareness and engagement, the series will also be seen on Sprout's VOD service and featured on its website with fun and interactive games and activities. Literary property Poppy Cat—backed by the television series from London's Coolabi that's airing on Sprout—should also reach US kids this fall through preschool plush, toys, games and apparel. Products for both properties will be in mid-tier, specialty and mass retailers for fall/holiday 2012. **k**



Top of the heap

BY LANA CASTLEMAN FEATURING
RESEARCH FROM THE NPD GROUP

With the help of market research firm The NPD Group's latest syndicated report, *Kids Industry Data Service (KIDS)*, we bring you the lowdown on what IPs are moving children's products at US retail

Bestselling Licenses

1. Disney Princess

2. Toy Story
3. Dora the Explorer
4. Star Wars
5. Barbie
6. Cars the Movie
7. SpongeBob SquarePants
8. Super Mario Bros.
9. Michael Jordan
10. NFL (National Football League)

(For US kids 0 to 14)

Source: All figures/charts quoted are from The NPD Group's most recent edition of KIDS, which analyzed data collected between September 2010 and March 2011.

Having launched the first monthly cross-category service that provides detailed info on market share across licenses, categories and retailers just six months ago, NPD toys and games industry analyst Anita Frazier is hesitant to talk license trends on KIDS.

"Once we have a full year's worth of data, we can start doing year-over-year comparisons to provide more trend insight," she says. However, she expects Cars 2 products will goose category sales much in the same way Toy Story 3's licensing bonanza did last year.

And speaking of Disney Consumer Products, Frazier says DVD/Blu-ray/video downloads is the biggest category driving top overall license Disney Princess sales, followed by toys and board games, Halloween, apparel or accessories and footwear. As for one to watch, she says Pokémon, while not in the top 10, has started to climb upward in the ranks again, thanks to the release of two new Nintendo DS titles in March.

In terms of overarching patterns, Frazier says, "What we've mostly seen is that seasonality really impacts category performance." For example, during the back-to-school season, sales of expected categories like apparel really escalate, while gift item sales predictably spike during the lead-up to Christmas.

But why not let six months' worth of data speak for itself? Read on for a full breakdown of what's topping both boys' and girls' wish lists in categories like apparel and accessories and consumer electronics.

Sometimes I
wonder why I hate
everyone.

And then I
remember.



It's probably
because of
everything.

Category performance

Apparel or accessories

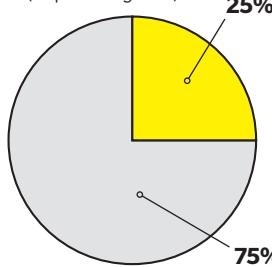
(18% \$ share of kids 0 to 14 market)

Top Licenses

1. Disney Princess
- 2. Dora the Explorer**
3. NFL
4. Toy Story
5. Hannah Montana
6. Disney Fairies
7. SpongeBob SquarePants
8. Cars The Movie
9. Hello Kitty & Friends
10. Spider-Man

Look who's asking

(\$ spent on goods)



25% requested by child
75% not requested

Look who's buying

(\$ share by buyer's age)

18 to 34	31%
35 to 44	29%
45 to 54	20%
55 to 64	11%
65 +	9%



Video games or PC software

(9% \$ share of kids 0 to 14 market)

Top Licenses

- 1. Super Mario Brothers**
2. Guitar Hero
3. Star Wars
4. Mario Kart
5. Pokémon
6. NFL
7. Call of Duty
8. Sonic the Hedgehog
9. Halo
10. Harry Potter



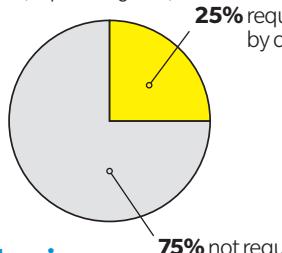
Look who's buying

(\$ share by buyer's age)

18 to 34	34%
35 to 44	36%
45 to 54	18%
55 to 64	8%
65 +	4%

Look who's asking

(\$ spent on goods)



25% requested by child
75% not requested

Toys or board games

(11% \$ share of kids 0 to 14 market)

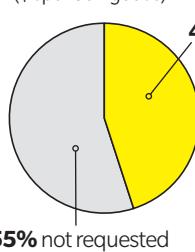
Top Licenses

- 1. Barbie**
2. Toy Story
3. Disney Princess
4. Star Wars
5. Cars The Movie
6. Thomas and Friends
7. Dora The Explorer
8. SpongeBob SquarePants
9. Transformers
10. Disney Fairies



Look who's asking

(\$ spent on goods)



45% requested by child
55% not requested

Look who's buying

(\$ share by buyer's age)

18 to 34	34%
35 to 44	25%
45 to 54	17%
55 to 64	13%
65 +	10%

Consumer electronics

(4% \$ share of kids 0 to 14 market)

Top Licenses

- 1. Apple iPod**

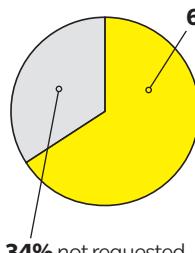


2. Samsung

3. Sony
4. Apple - other
5. LG
6. Nintendo
7. Dell
8. HP
9. Disney
10. Compaq

Look who's asking

(\$ spent on goods)



66% requested by child
34% not requested

Look who's buying

(\$ share by buyer's age)

18 to 34	34%
35 to 44	36%
45 to 54	20%
55 to 64	6%
65 +	4%

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Buying behavior Girls

Who they buy

(Top licenses by \$ spend)

3 to 5



1. **Disney Princess**
2. Dora the Explorer
3. Barbie
4. Disney Fairies
5. Toy Story

6 to 8



1. Disney Princess
2. **Barbie**
3. Hannah Montana
4. Disney Fairies
5. Mario Kart

9 to 11



1. **Hannah Montana**
2. Disney Princess
3. Super Mario Bros.
4. iCarly
5. Barbie

Brands they buy

(Top brands by \$ spend)

3 to 5



1. **Disney**
2. Nintendo
3. Nike
4. Mattel
5. Circo

6 to 8



1. **Nintendo**
2. Disney
3. Nike
4. Mattel
5. Crayola

9 to 11



1. **Nike**
2. Nintendo
3. Apple iPod
4. Microsoft
5. Disney

What they buy

(Top categories by \$ spend)

3 to 5



1. **Apparel or accessories**
2. Toys or board games
3. Footwear
4. DVDs, Blu-ray discs, video downloads
5. Video game system hardware

6 to 8



1. **Apparel or accessories**
2. **Toys or board games**
3. Footwear
4. Video games or PC game software
5. Video game system hardware

9 to 11



1. **Apparel or accessories**
2. Footwear
3. **Video game system hardware**
4. Video games or PC game software
5. Gift cards



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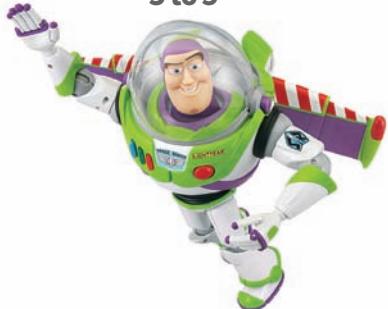


Buying behavior Boys

Who they buy

(Top licenses by \$ spend)

3 to 5



1. **Toy Story**
2. Cars the Movie
3. Spider-Man
4. Star Wars
5. SpongeBob SquarePants

6 to 8



1. Star Wars
2. Toy Story
3. Super Mario Bros.
4. **Mario Kart**
5. Spider-Man

9 to 11



1. **Star Wars**
2. NFL
3. Super Mario Bros.
4. Michael Jordan
5. Spider-Man

Brands they buy

(Top brands by \$ spend)

3 to 5



1. **Nintendo**
2. Nike
3. Disney
4. Wii
5. LEGO

6 to 8



1. Nintendo
2. Nike
3. **LEGO**
4. Sony
5. Hasbro

9 to 11

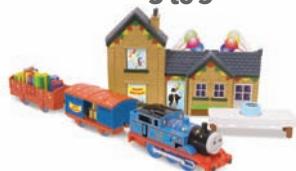


1. **Nike**
2. Microsoft
3. Sony
4. Nintendo
5. Apple iPod

What they buy

(Top categories by \$ spend)

3 to 5



1. **Toys or board games**
2. Apparel or accessories
3. Footwear
4. Video games or PC game software
5. Video game system hardware

6 to 8



1. Toys or board games
2. **Apparel or accessories**
3. Video games or PC game software
4. Video game system hardware
5. Footwear

9 to 11



1. Video games or PC game software
2. **Video game system hardware**
3. Apparel or accessories
4. Footwear
5. Toys or board games



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Outtakes

Bits too good to leave out of the book

Even a kid who can't spell hypocrite knows what one is. The prototype for the character that showed exactly what play is was Tom Hanks in *Big*—it's still a classic. **97%** of the TV content that is made **never sees the light of day**. I did a very short stint as a product manager for canned fruit at Delmonte. It was the **worst job ever**—the most boring job known to mankind.

- An evaluation overheard on Twitter from the **Dust or Magic App Camp** put on by The Children's Technology Review

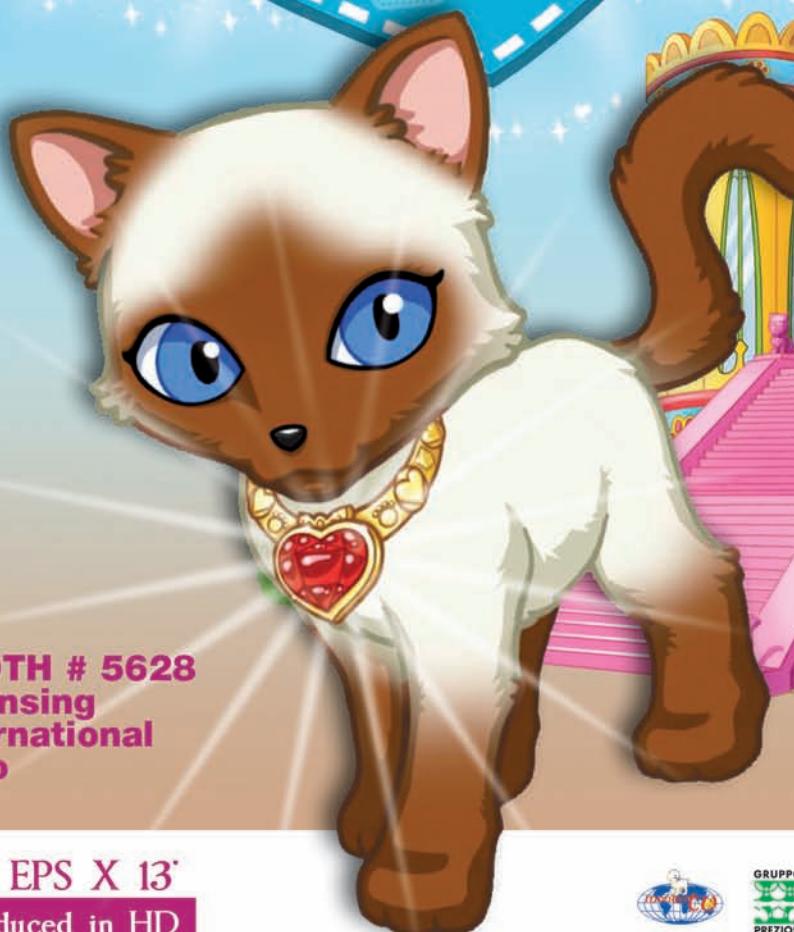
- **Dr. Stuart Brown**, founder of the National Institute for Play, describing the facets of true kids play

- Mind Candy's **Darran Garnham** on shows that never get picked up at MIPCOM and the online opportunity for them

- Disney Consumer Products' **Jessi Dunne** discussing what prompted her move into the entertainment biz

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